

***Ebony* Magazine, Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making
and Selling of Modern Black History, 1958-1987**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities**

2015

James West

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

CONTENTS:

Abstract: **3**

Declaration **4**

Copyright Statement: **5**

Introduction: **7**

- 1.) Tell Us Of Our Past: *Ebony* Magazine, Civil Rights and the Turn Toward
Black History: **34**
- 2.) The Books You've Waited For: *Ebony* and the JPC Book Division: **67**
- 3.) Of Time, Space and Revolution: Bennett, Black History and Black Power:
101
- 4.) These Black Men Helped Change the World: Gender, Sexuality and
Black History: **137**
- 5.) No Place Like Home: Black History, Heritage Tourism and the
Bicentennial: **175**
- 6.) His Light Still Shines: *Ebony*, Black History and the 'Real Meaning' of the
King Holiday: **212**

Conclusion: **248**

Bibliography: **262**

Final Word Count: 79,618

Abstract:

This thesis is concerned with the ways in which *Ebony* magazine sought to recover, popularise and utilise black history between the late 1950s and the late 1980s. The dominant scholarly approach to *Ebony* has focused on the magazine's bourgeois values and visual aesthetics, and has ignored its importance as a creator and disseminator of black history. By contrast, I highlight the multiple ways in which black history became central to *Ebony's* content from the late 1950s onwards. Far from viewing *Ebony* as peripheral to or simply reflective of popular debates into the black past, I place the magazine at the heart of contestations between the corporate, philosophical and political uses of black history during the second half of the twentieth century.

In *Ebony*, this shift was quarterbacked by Lerone Bennett Jr., the magazine's senior editor and in-house historian. Bennett's emergence as a prominent black historian and intellectual, and his increased desire to present history 'from a black perspective', was paralleled by *Ebony's* broader move from a more politicised to a more market-driven moment. Rooted in my unique position as the first scholar to look at Bennett's unprocessed papers at Chicago State University, and one of the first researchers to examine Bennett's collections at Emory University, this thesis sheds new light on the work of Bennett, on *Ebony's* significance as a 'history book' for millions of readers, and on the magazine's place at the centre of post-war debates into the form and function of African-American history.

Declaration:

The author declares that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Copyright Statement:

- i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.
- ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.
- iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=487>), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library's regulations (see <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations>) and in The University's policy on Presentation of Theses.

INTRODUCTION:

In the June 1969 issue of *Ebony* magazine, its 'Backstage' feature highlighted a 'Buried Afro-American History' brochure which was being distributed to prospective subscribers.¹ Playing on the title of Arthur Schomburg's seminal 1925 essay 'The Negro Digs Up His Past', the brochure celebrated *Ebony's* own role in recovering black history for a popular audience.² When read in isolation, this artefact could be dismissed as just one of many marketing ploys used by Johnson Publishing Company (JPC) to reinforce *Ebony's* position as the most widely read black magazine in the world.³ However, when placed within the context of *Ebony's* broader content, it becomes part of vast and deeply rooted editorial project. Publisher John H. Johnson declared that 'from the yellowed pages of forgotten newspapers and from the writings of black historians who have themselves compiled volumes of black history, we have become one of the most authoritative sources of black history in the world today.'⁴

This thesis is concerned with the ways in which *Ebony* sought to recover, popularise and utilise black history between the late 1950s and the late 1980s. These years saw a significant shift in *Ebony's* historical coverage, which can be mapped onto the broader 'coming of age' of black history during the decades

¹ In the literature *Ebony* is referred to in plain text and italicised, and in lower and upper case. For consistency this thesis uses the lower cased italicised *Ebony* throughout. "Backstage," *Ebony*, June 1969, 27.

² Arthur S. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," in *Look For Me All Around You: Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Louis J. Parascandola (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 414-420.

³ The question of what constitutes a 'black' magazine has frequently centred on ownership, production and orientation. This study takes its definition from Roland Wolseley's examination of the black press, which stipulates that 1. Blacks must hold ownership and editorial control of a publication, 2. The publication must be intended for predominantly black customers, and 3. The publication must 'serve, speak and fight for the black minority.' Roland E. Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 1-5.

⁴ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1968, 29.

following World War II.⁵ The institutionalisation of black studies within the academy, the rise of the black museums movement, the federal recognition of Black History Month, the unprecedented success of Alex Haley's *Roots* saga, and the movement to establish a federal holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. - all were part of black history's transition from the margins to the centre of American cultural, historical and political representation.⁶

In *Ebony*, this shift was quarterbacked by journalist and historian Lerone Bennett, Jr., who contributed a vast array of historical features to the magazine during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.⁷ These contributions fed directly into the publication of nine books through the JPC Book Division between 1962 and 1979. This included *Before the Mayflower*, which by 1987 had entered its sixth edition, and had become one of the best-selling black history books of all time.⁸ *Ebony* provided Bennett with a readership of millions, and the platform to become perhaps the 'best-known and most influential black historian' in America.⁹ Conversely, Bennett's prominence helped to legitimate *Ebony's* role as a major outlet for black history and culture.¹⁰ As one of the first scholars to examine Bennett's unprocessed papers at Emory University, and as the first researcher to explore Bennett's expansive new archive at Chicago State

⁵ Robert L. Harris, "Coming of Age: the Transformation of Afro-American Historiography," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1982): 107.

⁶ Andrea A. Burns, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); David L. Chappell, *Waking From the Dream: the Struggle for Civil Rights in the Shadow of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Random House, 2014); Alex Haley, *Roots: the Saga of an American Family* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976); Ibram X. Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Keith A. Mayes, *Kwanzaa: Black Power and the Making of the African American Black Holiday* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 187-214; Mabel Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

⁷ This included seven major black history series, and countless individual articles and op-eds.

⁸ Bennett, *Before the Mayflower: a History of Black America*, seventh edition (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2007), preface to sixth edition; "Ebony Book Shelf," *Ebony*, February 1988, 26.

⁹ Columbus Salley, *The Black 100: a Ranking of the Most Influential African-Americans, Past and Present* (Secaucus: Carol Publishing, 1993), 260.

¹⁰ Adelaide Gulliver, "The Shaping of Black America," *Black Times*, August 1975, 36.

University, I look to challenge this significant gap in both *Ebony's* own history, and twentieth century African American cultural and intellectual history.¹¹

There are two key arguments which underpin this study. The dominant scholarly approach to *Ebony* has taken its cue from E. Franklin Frazier's 1957 study *Black Bourgeoisie*, which presented the magazine as a vehicle of wish fulfilment for the black middle class.¹² As a result, many critics have neglected its importance as an outlet for black history, and by extension the significance of Bennett's own contributions. By contrast, I look to solidify *Ebony's* influence as a maker and shaper of black history, and demonstrate the centrality of Bennett to this role. Taking up Vincent Harding's claim that *Ebony* functioned as one of the most important 'stimulants to and repositories of the modern black history revival', I highlight the ways in which black history became a vital component of *Ebony's* content from the late 1950s onwards.¹³

Secondly, I argue that as *Ebony's* coverage of black history developed, it became an important vehicle for both the politicisation and commercialisation of the black past. Johnson would later declare in his memoirs that 'I wasn't trying to make history – I was trying to make money.'¹⁴ Yet these aims were not mutually exclusive. As this study shows, *Ebony's* multivalent construction of black history was both highly politicized and highly marketable, and these two strands intersected in different ways at different times. In this respect then, I look to move beyond the uncritical celebration of *Ebony's* historical coverage by figures such as Harding to offer a more ambiguous assessment of its form and

¹¹ Lerone Bennett Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA; Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Chicago State University, Chicago, IL.

¹² E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: The Free Press, 1957).

¹³ Vincent Harding, "Power From Our People: the Sources of the Modern Revival of Black History," *The Black Scholar* 18 (1987): 40-51.

¹⁴ John H. Johnson with Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Succeeding Against the Odds* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 156.

function. In doing so, this study sheds new light on the work of Bennett, on *Ebony's* significance as a 'history book' for millions of readers, and on the magazine's place at the centre of post-war debates into the form and function of African American history.

Johnson Publishing Company and America's Favourite Black Magazine

Born in Arkansas City in 1918, John H. Johnson had moved north to Chicago with his mother in 1933.¹⁵ Following high school Johnson found work at Supreme Life, one of the nation's largest black insurance firms.¹⁶ As an editor for the company's monthly newspaper *The Guardian* Johnson saw the potential to create his own magazine, which would function as a black equivalent to *Reader's Digest*.¹⁷ The appropriately titled *Negro Digest* began publication in November 1942, and quickly became one of the biggest selling black periodicals in the country.¹⁸ Its success prompted the development of a more ambitious periodical titled *Ebony*, which began publication in November 1945. A glossy photo-editorial magazine, *Ebony* offered black America's 'best foot forward' through depictions of a high-functioning, aspirational and predominantly middle class black world.¹⁹ Early readers questioned *Ebony's* depiction of dating and sex, while its reluctance to take a firm stance on racial prejudice contrasted with the historic role of the black press as a 'crusading'

¹⁵ Johnson's biological father Leroy had been killed in a saw-mill accident when he was a young boy. PhD Thesis, Box 11, Doris E. Saunders Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL.

¹⁶ *Ebony presents the John H. Johnson Interview*, directed by Lerone Bennett, Jr. (Chicago, Johnson Publishing Company, 2007), DVD.

¹⁷ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 120-123.

¹⁸ "Editorial Statement," *Negro Digest*, November 1942, 1-2; Jonathan Scott Holloway, *Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory and Identity in Black America since 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 43.

¹⁹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1945, 2; Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 41; Gayle Wald, *Crossing the Line: Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 125-126.

press.²⁰ However, its commitment to documenting ‘all the swell things we Negroes can do and will accomplish’ was a hit from the start.²¹ Within a year of its initial publication *Ebony’s* circulation had risen to 200,000, and it had cemented its position as the biggest black magazine in the world.²²

Despite such rapid growth, *Ebony’s* fate was initially uncertain. Its photo-editorial format was more expensive to produce than the traditional layout of black periodicals, and meant that its success quickly became a financial burden.²³ Johnson’s salvation was his ability to secure white corporate backing, starting with an advertising contract with Zenith Radio in 1947.²⁴ The magazine connected its expanding editorial content to its advertising gains, and thanked its readers for proving to advertisers that blacks were ‘a devoted and steadfast as well as intelligently spending audience.’²⁵ *Ebony’s* success laid the foundations for new titles such as *Copper Romance*, *Jet*, and *Tan Confessions* during the early 1950s.²⁶ However, the tone of articles such as ‘What to Teach Youngsters about Sex’ continued to attract criticism.²⁷ An important factor affecting *Ebony’s* shift away from more sensational editorial tone was the recession of 1953-1954, which revealed the volatility of the newsstand market.²⁸

The most prominent editorial casualty of this period was Ben Burns, a white

²⁰ Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), xi; “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, December 1945, 51; “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, February 1946, 51; Alex Lubin, *Romance and Rights: The Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945-1954* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 80-85; Armistead Scott Pride and Clint C. Wilson, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997), 127.

²¹ “Backstage,” *Ebony*, November 1945, 2.

²² “Backstage,” *Ebony*, December 1945, 1; “*Ebony* Circulation Nears 200,000 Mark,” *Advertising Age*, 18 March 1946, 31.

²³ *Ebony presents the John H. Johnson Interview*, directed by Lerone Bennett, Jr. (Chicago, Johnson Publishing Company, 2007), DVD.

²⁴ Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line*, 40-42; Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 183-192.

²⁵ “Backstage,” *Ebony*, June 1948, 10.

²⁶ “*Ebony* Mag Nears 500,000 Mark,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 19 July 1951, A1; “Good News,” *The Crisis*, March 1952, 157; David Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines since 1900* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 102.

²⁷ “Backstage,” *Ebony*, April 1950, 12.

²⁸ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 234.

Chicagoan writer who had overseen much of *Ebony's* early content, but who was blamed by Johnson for the magazine's 'overemphasis on sex, mixed marriage and other similar stories.'²⁹ By the mid-1950s, *Ebony* had settled into a more socially conservative, family-oriented style, which prompted a shift from a reliance on newsstand sales to a stable subscription base.³⁰

Relatedly, the magazine began to cover issues of race relations and civil rights in more detail. This was true of other Johnson publications, with *Jet* receiving wide acclaim for its coverage of the murder of Emmett Till in 1955.³¹ Although criticisms of *Ebony* remained, it became an important outlet for black cultural representation and political expression during the civil rights and Black Power eras.³² Similarly, influenced by the cultural nationalism of the Black Arts movement, the magazine moved toward a more explicitly pro-black aesthetic in its representation of black beauty and style.³³ This editorial shift was even more pronounced in *Negro Digest*, which had been cancelled in 1951 but was revived a decade later. Under the direction of Hoyt Fuller, *Negro Digest* became a 'primary instrument of the Black Arts Movement' and was renamed *Black World* in 1970.³⁴

²⁹ In his autobiography Burns suggested that tensions between himself and Johnson had been apparent for some time and that other factors played a part in his dismissal, including Burns' historic affiliations with the Communist Party. See Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty: a White Editor in Black Journalism* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 118.

³⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, April 1955, 14; "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1959, 24; John N. Ingham and Lynne B. Feldman, *African American Business Leaders: a Biographical Dictionary* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 373.

³¹ Simeon Booker with Carole McCabe Booker, *Shocking the Conscience: a Reporter's Account of the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 84; E. James West, "We Were All Pioneers: a Discussion with Simeon Booker," *Southern Quarterly* 52 (2014): 217-219.

³² Korey Bowers Brown, "Souled Out: *Ebony* Magazine in an Age of Black Power, 1965-1975," (PhD diss.: Howard University, 2010).

³³ Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain't I A Beauty Queen? Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 87-95.

³⁴ "Editor's Notes," *Black World*, May 1970, 4; Abby Arthur Johnson and Ronald Maberry Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics: the Literary Politics of African American Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), 167.

As collective black activism subsided during the 1970s, *Ebony's* coverage came to reflect the growing fractures between different sections of the black community.³⁵ 'We are moving in a crisis of identity' Johnson declared in 1973; 'everyone wants to identify with his own.'³⁶ The publisher responded through diversification – introducing *Ebony, Jr!* and Fashion Fair Cosmetics, and pursuing new radio and television interests.³⁷ However, the emergence of periodicals such as *Black Enterprise* and *Essence* marked the first serious challenge to Johnson's domination of the black magazine market since the early 1950s.³⁸ *Essence* was particularly keen to distinguish itself from *Ebony*, with sales director Clarence Thomas informing prospective advertisers that 'the *Essence* woman is not reading *Ebony*. That's her parents magazine...the *Essence* woman is ahead of the old pack and shaping a new curve.'³⁹

Such shifts on a community and industry level were exacerbated by a downturn in the American economy during the 1970s. From its creation until the end of the 1960s, *Ebony* had enjoyed an almost continual period of growth which mirrored the nation's post-World War economic boom.⁴⁰ However, hit by economic malaise and fragmentation of collective movement activism, the

³⁵ Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, "Introduction," in *African American Urban History since World War II*, ed. Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1-18.

³⁶ Daniel Gross, *Forbes Greatest Business Stories of All Time* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 154.

³⁷ "Backstage," *Ebony*, December 1973, 30; "Fashion Fair Cosmetics," *Ebony*, November 1992, 70-75; Laretta Henderson, *Ebony, Jr!: the Rise, Fall and Return of a Black Children's Magazine* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008); "JPC-TV," *Ebony*, November 1992, 76-81.

³⁸ Earl G. Graves, *How to Succeed in Business Without Being White: Straight Talk on Making it in America* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1997), 1-4; Noliwe M. Rooks, *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 140-141; Sumner, *The Magazine Century*, 157-159; Susannah Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 93-94.

³⁹ Edward Lewis with Audrey Edwards, *The Man From Essence: Creating a Magazine for Black Women* (New York: Atria Book, 2014), 104.

⁴⁰ Stuart Bruchey, "A Brief Overview of Post-World War II Expansions," in *History of the U.S. Economy since World War II*, ed. Harold G. Vatter and John F. Walker (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 48-51; Randall Bennett Woods, *Quest For Identity: America Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 121-123.

magazine's circulation stagnated during the seventies.⁴¹ Changes to the magazine's formatting and internal cost-cutting exercises, alongside an upturn in the American economy, led to a revival of fortunes during the 1980s.⁴² *Ebony's* circulation reached new heights, and JPC supplanted Motown as the nation's largest black owned business in 1984.⁴³

In retrospect, the decade between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s arguably marked the high point of *Ebony's* readership and cultural impact. Monthly circulation peaked at over 2 million around the magazine's fiftieth anniversary in 1995, while Johnson would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Bill Clinton a year later.⁴⁴ However, by Johnson's death in 2005 its readership had fallen by around thirty percent, and the economic and executive turmoil of the past decade has raised serious questions over the publication's future – questions exacerbated by the sale of its headquarters in Chicago, plans to auction off its historic photo archive, and the missed release of a monthly issue for only the second time in the magazine's history.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, as *Ebony* approaches its seventieth anniversary in November 2015, it remains an important outlet for black history and culture.

⁴¹ "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, December 1976, 25; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, January 1981, 20.

⁴² "Backstage," *Ebony*, March 1982, 18; "Black Star Magazine Ends," *New York Times*, 11 June 1981, D6; "Ebony, Jet fire 51," *Afro-American*, 4 July 1981, 1; "Publisher Cuts Back," *Boston Globe*, 10 June 1981, 1.

⁴³ "B. E. 100 Overview," *Black Enterprise*, June 1984, 84.

⁴⁴ "The Medal of Freedom Awards," *Ebony*, November 1996, 28; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, January 1996, 129; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, December 1996, 160.

⁴⁵ Robert Channick, "Ebony Skips March Issue to Renegotiate Higher Ad Rates," *Chicago Tribune*, 17 March 2015, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-ebony-skips-issue-0318-biz-20150317-story.html>; Channick, "Johnson Publishing to Sell Historic Photo Archive," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 January 2015, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-johnson-publishing-archives-sale-0126-biz-20150123-story.html>.

Literature Review

In his recent doctoral dissertation on *Ebony*, Korey Bowers Brown has identified two main schools of thought which have characterised scholarly responses to the magazine.⁴⁶ The first school of thought has centred on a critique of its 'editorial and topical content, often by analysing limited samples of *Ebony's* articles', and predominantly focused on the magazine's response, or non-response, to the rise of the modern civil rights movement.⁴⁷ The second has surveyed the 'products and services that were advertised in *Ebony*, often to assess the manner in which *Ebony* promoted consumerism to black America.'⁴⁸ Both of these approaches have been heavily influenced by E. Franklin Frazier's critique of *Ebony* in his 1957 study *Black Bourgeoisie*. In contrast to *Ebony's* defence of black consumerism as a 'weapon in the war for racial equality', Frazier chided the magazine for embodying the 'make-believe world of the black bourgeoisie.'⁴⁹

However, more recent scholars such as Lizabeth Cohen, Lawrence Glickman and Gavin Wright have sought to re-evaluate the role of consumer

⁴⁶ Brown, "Souled Out," 9.

⁴⁷ Tony Atwater, "Editorial Policy of *Ebony* Before and After the Civil Rights Act of 1964," *Journalism Quarterly* 59 (1982): 87-91; J. W. Click, "Comparison of Editorial Content in *Ebony* Magazine, 1967 and 1974," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 52 (1975): 716-720; Walter Goodman, "*Ebony*: Biggest Negro Magazine," *Dissent* 15 (1968): 403-409; Paul M. Hirsch, "An Analysis of *Ebony*: the Magazine and its Readers," *Journalism Quarterly* 45 (1968): 261-270; Gloria Myers and A. V. Margavio, "The Black Bourgeoisie and Reference Group Change: A Content Analysis of *Ebony*," *Qualitative Sociology* 6 (1983): 291-307; Valerie Saddler, "A Content Analysis of *Ebony's* and *Life's* 1955-1965 Reporting on Black Civil Rights Movement Issues" (PhD diss., Ohio University, 1984).

⁴⁸ Michael K. Chapko, "Black Ads Are Getting Blacker," *Journal of Communications* 26 (1976): 175-178; George Gitter, Stephen M. O'Connell and David Mostofsky, "Trends in the Appearance of Models in *Ebony* Ads over 17 Years," *Journalism Quarterly* 49 (1972): 547-550; Michael Leslie, "Slow Fade To?: Advertising in *Ebony* Magazine, 1957-1989," *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly* 72 (1995): 426-435.

⁴⁹ Stephanie Capparell, *The Real Pepsi Challenge: the Inspirational Story of Breaking the Color Line in American Business* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 133; Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie*, 179.

activism in the struggle for racial equality.⁵⁰ As Cohen notes in her 2003 study *A Consumers' Republic*, the marketplace has 'long been a crucial site of African-American political assertiveness', and black media outlets such as *Ebony* came to play an important role in promoting black consumer rights as a key plank in the civil rights platform during the years following World War II.⁵¹ Adam Green is one of a number of scholars who have looked to unpack *Ebony's* role in this process. In his 2007 study *Selling the Race*, Green offers a largely positive depiction of *Ebony* during the 1940s and 1950s, arguing that the magazine's content demonstrates how 'race's sale might constitute a creative, even transforming experiment in African American imagination and expression.'⁵²

Similarly, Jason Chambers has focused on the magazine's advertising to emphasise its role in establishing commercial power as a 'necessary part of blacks' broader quest for civil, social and political equality.'⁵³ In his 2008 study *Madison Avenue and the Color Line*, Chambers argues that Johnson's pioneering success with both advertisers and readers gave him 'an unprecedented level of authority among those who professed to be experts on the black consumer market.'⁵⁴ This position has expanded on the work of earlier figures such as Robert Weems, who in his 1998 study *Desegregating the Dollar* named Johnson alongside D. Parke Gibson as one of the 'two most influential

⁵⁰ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Lawrence B. Glickman, *Buying Power: a History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Robert E. Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Gavin Wright, *Sharing the Prize: the Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution in the American South* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 323.

⁵² Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community and Black Chicago, 1940-1955* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 129-130.

⁵³ Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line*, 45.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 41-45.

black consultants to corporate America during the 1960s.⁵⁵ Such research has develop a more comprehensive analysis of changes in the magazine's production and direction over time. However, it has often served to keep Johnson at the centre of the magazine's analysis – a position reinforced by the publication of Johnson's self-indulgent memoirs in 1989, the autobiographical riposte of Ben Burns in 1996, and the eulogising which followed Johnson's death in 2005.⁵⁶

This focus on Johnson has narrowed the purview of scholarly analysis, and meant that the significant contributions of other employees and staff members have been neglected. As Green has rightly observed, *Ebony's* content should be understood as the 'shared accomplishment of an eclectically diverse and talented staff; one whose varied experiences and social orientation equipped it to represent postwar black life in uniquely ambitious ways.'⁵⁷ Despite its limitations, Burns' 1996 autobiography *Nitty Gritty* has helped to instigate an important conversation about the role of white publishers and editors within black periodical production, which has been expanded by figures such as Mia Long and Carla Kaplan.⁵⁸ Relatedly, scholars such as Ayesha Hardison and Jinx Coleman Broussard have shed new light on the contributions of, and challenges faced by Era Bell Thompson and other pioneering female journalists at JPC.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*, 73.

⁵⁶ Burns, *Nitty Gritty*; Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*; Adrienne Washington, "John H. Johnson Leaves a Legacy of Inspiration," *Washington Times*, 16 August 2005, B2.

⁵⁷ Green, *Selling the Race*, 15.

⁵⁸ Carla Kaplan, *Miss Anne in Harlem: the White Women of the Black Renaissance* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013); Mia C. Long, "Seeking a Place in the Sun: *Sepia* Magazine's Endeavor for Quality Journalism and Place in the Negro Market, 1951-1982" (PhD Diss., University of Alabama, 2011).

⁵⁹ Jinx Coleman Broussard, *African American Foreign Correspondents* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 126-136; Jinx Coleman Broussard and Sky Chance Cooley,

New research has also been aided by the partial digitisation of JPC's back catalogue, and the release of new archival holdings for JPC employees such as Ben Burns, Hoyt Fuller, Phyl Garland, Allan Morrison, Doris Saunders and Era Bell Thompson.⁶⁰ As a result of such developments, new scholarship has been able to develop a more nuanced appreciation of the company's editorial and production politics. Scholars such as Jonathan Fenderson and James Smethurst have looked to further critique the development of a 'cultural, historical and political leftwing of JPC' during the 1960s, and have moved away from an emphasis on *Ebony's* content to explore the complex and frequently contested production of the company's other periodicals.⁶¹ Within *Ebony's* own pages, Korey Bower Brown has addressed the influence of younger and more militant writers such as Peter Bailey and David Llorens during the Black Power era.⁶²

One aspect of this trend has been a renewed interest in *Ebony's* role as a vehicle for popular black history. In her 2005 study *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines*, Carolyn Kitch astutely notes that while a number of scholars have examined *Ebony's* content in relation to specific periods of history, 'no work has considered the magazine's own significance as a "history book," as a disseminator of information about history

"*Ebony's* Era Bell Thompson Travels the World to Tell the Story," *American Journalism* 26 (2009): 7-30; Ayesha K. Hardison, *Writing Through Jane Crow: Race and Gender Politics in African American Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014).

⁶⁰ Morrison's papers are housed at the Schomburg Center branch of New York Public Library, the papers of Burns, Saunders and Thompson are held at the Woodson branch of Chicago Public Library, Hoyt Fuller's papers are housed at Atlanta University Center, and the papers of Phyl Garland are available at Indiana University.

⁶¹ Houston A. Baker, *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 160-168; Jonathan Fenderson, "Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic: Hoyt Fuller, the Black Arts Movement and the Black Intellectual Community" (PhD diss.: University of Massachusetts, 2011), 44; James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 207-209.

⁶² Brown, "Souled Out," 116-119.

(and explainer of history's significance) to African Americans.'⁶³ Focusing on the magazine's historical content from the 1980s onwards, Kitch uses *Ebony* as an example of how American magazines have increasingly taken on the role of public historians by 'supplementing the communicative and educational role in American society of institutions such as museums, archives, historical tourism sites, and war memorials.'⁶⁴ Through doing so, Kitch highlights the importance of 'history as a living presence' for *Ebony*'s coverage, and the magazine's belief that black Americans could 'thrive in the present only with an understanding of the past.'⁶⁵

This sentiment has been taken up by Pero Dagbovie in his 2010 study *African American History Reconsidered*, where the author focuses on Bennett's role in 'almost single-handedly' popularising black history among *Ebony*'s readers.⁶⁶ Taking *Ebony* as the medium through which Bennett developed his understanding of black history as a 'living history'; Dagbovie illustrates how this concept took on 'multiple expressions, appearing as an ideology, a scholarly discipline, and a source of pride and energy.' In doing so, he emphasises Bennett's belief that black history needed to be both functional and pragmatic, and that it carried a unique and practical importance for black Americans.⁶⁷ From this perspective, Bennett's work can be read as both an extension of a search for a 'usable' past by earlier black historians, and a precursor to the work of scholars such as Manning Marable.⁶⁸ However, Manning's own neglect of

⁶³ Carolyn Kitch, *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 208.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶⁶ Pero Garo Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 39.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

Bennett's writing in his 2005 study *Living Black History* is indicative of Bennett's continued neglect in the scholarship.⁶⁹

We can link the work of scholars such as Dagbovie and Kitch to the more personal accounts of figures such as Toni King, Jonathan Scott Holloway and Daryl Michael Scott, who have all reflected on the ways in which *Ebony* helped to frame their childhood consumption of black culture and history. In her 2003 essay 'Who's That Lady?: *Ebony* Magazine and Black Professional Women', King mediates her discussion of *Ebony's* content in the 1970s through personal recollections. 'As early as four years old', the author notes, 'I can remember sitting with my mother and turning the glossy pages of one of those magazines.'⁷⁰ Through such descriptions, King positions *Ebony* as a form of 'public historian' in her own life, and emphasises the magazine's role in connecting individual memories to the broader history of self and community. Whereas the magazine's sister publication *Jet* provided 'small talk' through everyday stories and entertainment, *Ebony* pursued the 'big talk' of building history on a grand scale; a process described by King as the 'culminating mythology of a people in the process of overcoming racial oppression.'⁷¹

In his 2013 study *Jim Crow Wisdom*, Jonathan Scott Holloway has made a similar distinction between *Ebony* and *Jet*, describing the magazines different roles as being rooted in their power as performative and highly visible outlets for black identity. Holloway recalls that he was always aware of *Ebony's* presence in his parent's home, and knew that 'if I were searching for something to do, I

⁶⁹ Manning Marable, *Living Black History: How Reimagining the African-American Past Can Remake America's Racial Future* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2005).

⁷⁰ Toni King, "Who's That Lady?: *Ebony* Magazine and Black Professional Women," in *Disco Divas: Women, Gender and Popular Culture in the 1970s*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 88.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

could find the latest issues of *Ebony* prominently displayed on the coffee table...it said that we were simultaneously middle to upper class and very comfortable in our blackness.’⁷² Reflecting more specifically on the impact of Bennett, Daryl Michael Scott has noted the editor’s influence in helping to shape his early engagement with the past. Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, Scott contends that Bennett’s contributions to *Ebony*, alongside the editor’s book-length studies, were key to the development of his own historical consciousness, and that in all things relating to black history, Bennett was ‘the man.’⁷³

Black History and the Black Public Sphere

Such personal accounts illustrate *Ebony*’s powerful role in building a sense of group identity and historical awareness, but also in making blackness visible to both black and non-black Americans. In this respect, *Ebony* marked an important continuation of the black press’ role in providing an outlet for African Americans to recover their own public image and identity.⁷⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, black newspapers such as *Freedom’s Journal*, the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* had developed a reputation as outlets which ‘redefined class, restaged race and nationhood and reset the terms of public conversation.’⁷⁵ Whereas *Ebony* distanced itself from this image of a ‘fighting press’, its commitment to

⁷² Holloway, *Jim Crow Wisdom*, 64.

⁷³ Daryl Michael Scott, “Following the Footsteps of John Hope Franklin,” in *Tributes to John Hope Franklin: Scholar, Mentor, Father, Friend*, ed. Beverly Jarrett (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 39-40.

⁷⁴ Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 88.

⁷⁵ John Ernest, *A Nation within a Nation: Organizing African American Communities before the Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 2011), 167; Todd Vogel, “Introduction,” in *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays* ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 1.

documenting black life 'from Harlem to Hollywood' marked an extension of the black press' role in fostering a national black consciousness.⁷⁶

As *Ebony's* publisher argued, blacks were part of civil rights organisations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League, but they were also members of sports teams and sororities – 'they marched and raised hell, but they also raised children and gave debutante balls and watched baseball and football games.'⁷⁷ Indeed, the photographs which appeared in *Ebony* and other Johnson publications were unlike depictions of black life in mainstream magazines precisely because they highlighted the achievements of ordinary black folk alongside the impact of prominent black celebrities.⁷⁸ Maren Stange has noted that through upholding familiar codes of journalistic objectivity, *Ebony's* editors looked to reject pervasive visual stereotypes of otherness or black pathology.

In the language of semiotic analysis, *Ebony's* visual intervention sought to dismantle and construct anew the coded system of signs that signifies what Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has called the "Public Negro." *Ebony's* images would detach, or disarticulate, racialized icons – that is, the recognizable black face and body – from the familiar markers of degradation, spectacle, and victimization.⁷⁹

Johnson offered a simplistic reading of this role, arguing that 'in a world of despair we wanted to give hope. In a world of negative black images we wanted to provide positive black images.'⁸⁰ Yet as Stange has acknowledged,

⁷⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1945, 2; Robert S. Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 87; Shirley E. Thompson, "The Black Press," in *A Companion to African American History*, ed. Alton Hornsby (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 336.

⁷⁷ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 159.

⁷⁸ Catherine R. Squires, *African Americans and the Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 81

⁷⁹ Maren Stange, "Photographs Taken in Everyday Life: *Ebony's* Photojournalistic Discourse," in *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays* ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 208

⁸⁰ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 159.

Ebony's attempt to reject the image of black Americans as either 'winged angels' or 'problem children' was in itself a powerful statement.⁸¹ By favouring content that championed racial achievement and self-affirmation, the magazine can be argued to have helped shift 'the site and construction of "politics" itself.'⁸² Moreover, by endeavouring to create a 'new public definition of blackness', *Ebony* continued the longstanding role of the black press in 'creating and recreating a public sphere' for African Americans.⁸³

Expanding on the work of Jürgen Habermas, a number of scholars have examined the ways in which black public institutions, media outlets and civic organisations have helped to cultivate, frame and limit the black public sphere.⁸⁴ In his influential 1994 essay 'Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere', Houston Baker argues that African Americans have always situated their 'unique forms of expressive publicity in a complex set of relationships to other forms of American publicity.'⁸⁵ Rallying against Habermas' notion of the bourgeois public sphere, critics have sought to reapply this concept to the study of the black public sphere as an 'emergent collective composed of people who (a) engage in common discourses and negotiations of what it means to be Black, and (b) pursue particularly defined Black interests.'⁸⁶ From this perspective, the black public sphere provided an important space to challenge

⁸¹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, August 1947, 8.

⁸² Wald, *Crossing the Line*, 126.

⁸³ Vogel, "Introduction," 3.

⁸⁴ Black Public Sphere Collective, *The Black Public Sphere: a Public Culture Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: the Roots of Contemporary African American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); C. K. Doreski, *Writing America Black: Race Rhetoric and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: the Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁸⁵ Baker, "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere," *Public Culture* 7 (1994): 13.

⁸⁶ Squires, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: an Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres," *Communication Theory* 12 (2002): 454.

hegemonic ideas about black identity, to critique the role of race in perpetuating inequality, and 'to devise strategies for advancing the interests of self and group.'⁸⁷

However, as scholars such as Robin Kelley have noted, even as it pushed back against white supremacy and oppression, the black public sphere also proved instrumental in promoting and disseminating black middle class cultural norms and values.⁸⁸ Similarly, feminist scholars such as Nancy Fraser have recognised the gendered parameters of both public and counterpublic spheres.⁸⁹ As black individuals and institutions sought to construct a public sphere to counteract hegemonic notions of race and race identity and to help 'uplift the race', they reified many of the biases of the 'bourgeois public sphere' identified by Habermas.⁹⁰ Whereas post-war black periodicals such as *Ebony* may have differed in their approach to creating 'a new public definition of blackness' than earlier black institutions, they inherited a notion of racial uplift which continued to be 'largely animated by a profound anxiety about the status specifically of African American *masculinity*', and framed by the desires and ambitions of a predominantly male black elite.⁹¹

These biases applied not only to the development of a national black consciousness in the present, but also to the recovery of a shared racial past. Following the failures of Reconstruction, black activists such as Frederick

⁸⁷ Melissa V. Harris-Lacewell, *Barbershops, Bibles and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5.

⁸⁸ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁸⁹ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: a Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 203.

⁹⁰ Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1996.

⁹¹ Philip Brian Harper, *Are We Not Men?: Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), preface.

Douglass realised that the post-Civil War era 'might ultimately be controlled by those who could best shape interpretations of the war itself.'⁹² Against the development of a 'Lost Cause' narrative which downplayed the central role of slavery and racism in the American Civil War, Douglass understood that history was a primary source for group identity and progress, and that black Americans had a particular need to understand and utilise their past.⁹³ Black historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century expanded on this position to champion historical awareness as a key plank in the platform for racial equality and full citizenship.⁹⁴ However, through their desire to recover a 'heroic' historical tradition, which was rooted in gendered hierarchies of racial progress and black leadership, black historians helped to construct a 'patrilineal black history.'⁹⁵

Lerone Bennett, Jr., and the Making and Selling of Modern Black History

Both the efforts of early black historians to 'recover' black history, and the limitations of their scholarship, were taken up by post-World War II black writers and intellectuals. By the early 1960s *Ebony's* Lerone Bennett had established himself as one of the one of the most influential figures in a new generation of black scholars who were demanding a 're-evaluation of the part that the people of African descent have played in the making of America.'⁹⁶ Continuing the pursuit of a 'usable past for American blacks' which had become a major theme

⁹² David W. Blight, "The Burden of African-American History: Memory, Justice, and a Usable Past," in *Major Problems in African-American History: Volume II, From Freedom to 'Freedom Now,' 1865-1990s* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company), 16.

⁹³ Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 229; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1-5.

⁹⁴ Carter G. Woodson, "Some Things Negroes Need to Do," *Southern Workman* 51 (1922): 33.

⁹⁵ Anna Pochmara, *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 10.

⁹⁶ John Henrik Clarke, "Lerone Bennett: Social Historian," *Freedomways*, Fall 1965, 481.

in black historiography, Bennett echoed the sentiments of Douglass and others who had argued that the past was 'the mirror in which we may discern the dim outlines of the future.'⁹⁷ Grounded in his contributions to *Ebony*, but expanding far beyond the remits of the publication, Bennett developed an understanding of black history as a 'living history', which would reach maturity during the 1980s.⁹⁸

This idea was rooted in a longstanding black intellectual tradition stretching back to early black newspapers such as *Freedom's Journal*, which had echoed organic models of cyclical history expressed by German philosophers and writers during the eighteenth century.⁹⁹ Similarly, Bennett built on a Du Boisian understanding of double consciousness, and Afrocentric critiques of American history, to present black history as 'a history of the inside outsiders.'¹⁰⁰ Most significantly, he expanded on the efforts of black nationalist historians and Garveyites to create a 'usable past' for American blacks by asserting that black history had real and practical implications as a 'living, utilitarian science.'¹⁰¹ Bennett declared that 'in and through black history, the voices of the past speak to us personally, calling us by name, asking us what we have done, what are we doing and what are we prepared to do' to overcome.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Blight, "The Burden of African-American History," 17; Clarence Earl Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History: Critical Essays and Reappraisals* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 34.

⁹⁸ Bennett, "A Living History: Voices of the Past Speak to the Present," *Ebony*, February 1985, 27.

⁹⁹ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: the Roots of African American Popular History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 52-54.

¹⁰⁰ Bennett, "Listen to the Blood: the Meaning of Black History," *Ebony*, February 1981, 33-34; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, reprint (Rockville: Arc Manor, 2008); Maghan Keita, *Race and the Writing of History: Riddling the Sphinx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁰¹ Danton Wilson, "We Must Become Conscious of Our Own Greatness," *Michigan Chronicle*, 15 February 1986, Box 9, Lerone Bennett Papers.

¹⁰² Bennett, "A Living History," 27.

Through his depiction of black history in *Ebony*, Bennett offered a black nationalist infused historical vision which celebrated the 'power of blackness' across time and space.¹⁰³ It was a history that functioned as a narrative of racial uplift, reminding black people that 'the God of history helps black people who help themselves.'¹⁰⁴ By blending the progressivism of W. E. B Du Bois and Martin Luther King with the militant rhetoric of Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X, and mixing the historical severity of Carter G. Woodson with the black spiritualism of Benjamin Mays and Howard Thurman, Bennett offered a vision of history that was potentially emancipatory.¹⁰⁵ However, this was a history that continued to be bound by restrictive covenants of race, class, sex and gender. By celebrating the black past as a cyclical and 'living' history, Bennett's writing and *Ebony's* historical content demonstrated the magazine's power as both a liberating and limiting voice for black history and culture.

From a different perspective, Bennett's move toward defining and interpreting history 'from a black perspective' during the 1960s and early 1970s was reflective of an American media and political culture which had become more receptive to the creation of radical black authored critical perspectives.¹⁰⁶ This was evidenced through the cultural impact of figures such as Stokely Carmichael and Julius Lester, the creation of new black think tanks such as the Institute of the Black World, and the emergence of black public affairs television and radio projects such as *Say Brother* and *Inside Bedford Stuyvesant*. Yet even as such outlets were being created, many were already feeling the impact

¹⁰³ Bennett, "Black Power Part III," *Ebony*, January 1966, 122.

¹⁰⁴ Bennett, "Of Time, Space and Revolution," *Ebony*, August 1969, 36.

¹⁰⁵ Bennett, "Benjamin Elijah Mays: The Last of the Great Schoolmasters," *Ebony*, December 1977, 73-80; Bennett, "Howard Thurman: 20th Century Holy Man," *Ebony*, February 1978, 68-76; Bennett, "Liberation," *Ebony*, August 1970, 36-45.

¹⁰⁶ Cleve Washington, "Lerone Bennett, Jr.: Exploring the Past/Creating a Future," Box 36, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

of a 'mainstreaming' of black life and history within the academy, the political arena, and the American marketplace. The splintering of collective black activism in the aftermath of King's death led to the decline of the Institute of the Black World and other important black intellectual spaces.¹⁰⁷ This was paralleled by the defunding of black public affairs programs, and the institutionalisation of radical black activists within academic and political institutions.¹⁰⁸

Relatedly, as black history moved 'from the margins of the American past to center stage in the analysis of the country's political, social, and economic development', the consumption of this history became increasingly contested.¹⁰⁹ The lines between historical awareness, corporate responsibility and American citizenship had always been visible to pioneering black historians such as Woodson, whose development of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) had been predicated on his ability to 'sell' black history through innovative promotional campaigns.¹¹⁰ This role was taken up and expanded by *Ebony* during the post-war years. Indeed, the capture of *Ebony's* first major advertising contract with Zenith was predicated on Johnson's ability to sell black history. Zenith founder and adventure enthusiast Eugene

¹⁰⁷ Derrick White, *The Challenge of Blackness: the Institute of the Black World and Political Activism in the 1970s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Devorah Heitner, *Black Power TV* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Cedric Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007); Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: the Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race and Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); Gayle Wald, *It's Been Beautiful: Soul! and Black Power Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁹ Lauren Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, "Toward a History of the Business of Black Power," in *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America*, ed. Lauren Warren Hill and Julia Rabig (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 15-44; Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History*, xi.

¹¹⁰ Lorenzo J. Greene, Arvarh E. Strickland, *Selling Black History for Carter G. Woodson: a Diary, 1930-1933* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 1-5; William D. Wright, *Black History and Black Identity: a Call for a New Historiography* (London: Praeger, 2002), 34.

McDonald was enamoured with the story of pioneering black explorer Matthew Alexander Henson, and Johnson played on this obsession to secure McDonald's sponsorship.¹¹¹

From the mid-1960s onwards major American corporations paralleled *Ebony's* broader 'turn' toward history through advertising campaigns which championed the black past.¹¹² The celebration of individual black pioneers by American advertisers complemented the development of Richard Nixon's 'black capitalism' initiatives, which celebrated individualism, private enterprise and self-sufficiency, but masked the dismantling of black political organisations and institutions.¹¹³ The 'ratification' of Black History Month by Gerald Ford in the 1970s, and Ronald Reagan's appropriation of King's legacy in the 1980s, further demonstrated the value of black history as part of corporate and political neoliberal projects. Bennett warned against the vagaries of 'black heritage', and argued the commemoration of history should not distract from the continuing struggle for racial equality. However, by the magazine's fortieth anniversary in 1985, it appear that the onus for the popularisation of black history had shifted away from black institutions and toward corporate providers and advertising agents.

Accordingly, whereas scholars such as Dagbovie and Kitch have begun their analysis of *Ebony's* historical content in the 1980s, I see this period as marking a retreat from the magazine's commitment to original and sustained historical content.¹¹⁴ On an individual level, this was embodied by the role of Bennett. Following his appointment as *Ebony's* executive editor in 1987,

¹¹¹ Derek T. Dingle, *Black Enterprise Titans of the B. E. 100s: Black CEOs who Redefined and Conquered American Business* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999), 17.

¹¹² Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line*, 93.

¹¹³ Hill and Rabig, "Toward a History of the Business of Black Power," 28.

¹¹⁴ Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 91-92.

Bennett's contributions became increasingly sporadic, and were frequently reprints of earlier history articles.¹¹⁵ This transition was indicative of a broader shift in *Ebony's* coverage of black history, which by the end of the 1980s had become predominantly focused around the celebration of the King Holiday and Black History Month. Furthermore, as *Ebony* came to appreciate the value of its own history, it retreated into a nostalgic vision of the black past – a move which reflected the broader contestations between black historical commemoration, political ideology, and corporate capitalism.¹¹⁶

Thesis Structure and Chapter Outline

The structure and chronology of this thesis uses Bennett's own role within JPC as a framework for my broader analysis of *Ebony's* historical coverage. Bennett's appointment as senior editor in 1958, and as executive editor in 1987, can be mapped onto more substantive shifts in *Ebony's* historical coverage and editorial leadership.¹¹⁷ His professional trajectory offers an important individual narrative for understanding the broader impact of black history's transition from the margins to the centre of American cultural, political, and ideological debates during the post-war years. His influence as an activist, educator, historian, journalist, poet and 'preacher' complements my own interdisciplinary analysis of *Ebony*, which combines cultural studies, historiography, reception theory, race studies, and production politics.¹¹⁸

This approach was also influenced by my unprecedented access to Bennett's archival collections at Chicago State and Emory University. These

¹¹⁵ "Editorial," *Ebony*, November 1987, 8.

¹¹⁶ "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, November 1985, 37.

¹¹⁷ There is some confusion over whether Bennett was appointed as *Ebony's* senior editor in 1958 or 1960. I address this question explicitly in chapter one, but for the title of my thesis have used 1958. "Lerone Bennett Jr., Named Executive Editor of *Ebony*," *Jet*, 28 December 1987, 19.

¹¹⁸ Ellis Cose, "Review of the Shaping of Black America," Box 34, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

archives reveal for the first time the true extent of Bennett's influence both inside and outside JPC. This influence has been hinted at through recent work by figures such as Martha Biondi and Derrick White, who have explored Bennett's role in the development of Northwestern's Afro-American Studies Department and the Institute of the Black World.¹¹⁹ My access to these archives has enabled me to present the first in-depth account of Bennett's professional and intellectual development between the 1950s and 1980s, and his rise from the forefront of a 'generation of new black thinkers' to a position as one of the most widely read black historians in the world.¹²⁰

Yet *Ebony's* historical coverage did not start with Bennett's appointment as senior editor, nor did it end with his promotion to executive editor. *Ebony's* commitment to black historical coverage both preceded and succeeded the chronology of this thesis.¹²¹ Similarly, while this thesis uses Bennett's work to frame my discussion of *Ebony's* historical content, it is important to recognise that Bennett was not the only figure shaping *Ebony's* coverage of the black past. Hoyt Fuller, Allan Morrison, Era Bell Thompson, and a host of other contributors possessed a 'profound sense of Black History' which influenced a turn toward history in *Ebony* and in other JPC publications such as *Jet* and *Negro Digest*.¹²² In looking to challenge the Johnson-centric historiography of *Ebony*, I have not intended to replace one 'great man' narrative with another. Bennett's influence as a historian far outstripped that of his fellow editors, but

¹¹⁹ Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); 95-100; White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 20-40.

¹²⁰ Clarke, "Lerone Bennett," 481.

¹²¹ Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 91-92.

¹²² Harris, "In Memoriam: Hoyt W. Fuller," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1982): 80.

his voice was one of many in the ‘perpetual conversation’ which took place across the magazine’s pages.¹²³

This thesis is formed of six core thematic chapters. Chapter one focuses on *Ebony*’s turn toward black history during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The introduction of Bennett’s first ‘Negro History’ series in 1961 and the magazine’s first historically themed special in 1963 were both important elements in this shift. In addition to helping introduce Bennett’s understanding of black history as a ‘living history’, they also demonstrated how *Ebony*’s historical coverage interacted with, and helped to expand, the magazine’s coverage of civil rights activism. Chapter two examines this shift from a different perspective by paralleling the development of *Ebony*’s historical coverage with the birth of the JPC Book Division. Through assessing the symbiotic relationship between these two elements of JPC in more detail, we can see how the Book Division played a critical role in establishing *Ebony*’s importance as a ‘history book’ for its audience.

Chapter three explores how the emergence of Black Power impacted on *Ebony*’s coverage of black history. Bennett’s ‘Black Power’ series, which centred on the role of black politicians during Reconstruction, predated Stokely Carmichael’s call for Black Power at the 1966 Meredith March by almost a year. In turn, articles such as his controversial ‘Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?’ in 1968 demonstrated how Bennett’s engagement with radicalising black activist and intellectual circles influenced his depiction of black history and black protest. Chapter four takes up underlying tensions within *Ebony*’s historical coverage to explore how the magazine both pushed back

¹²³ Bennett, “A Living History,” 28.

against, and helped to consolidate, a patriarchal and heterosexist depiction of black history during the 1960s and 1970s. Biases in *Ebony's* historical coverage were influenced by a range of factors, including Bennett's own understanding of the relationship between black masculinity and black protest, gender hierarchies within black literary and intellectual thought, and the magazine's own advertisers.

Chapter five focuses on how *Ebony* looked to mediate apparent fractures within the black community during the 1970s by using black history as a unifying device. *Ebony's* celebration of heritage tourism as a way to bring different sections of the black community together was reiterated by an array of travel providers. However, through their celebration of black history, American corporations sought to endear themselves to black consumers and distance themselves from complicity in reinforcing segregation and racial inequality. Chapter six explores *Ebony's* discussion of King's legacy and the movement to establish a national holiday for King. Bennett sought to reject the image of a colourblind King projected by Reagan and other conservative commentators. Yet his own depiction of the 'living King' revealed underlying tensions within the black community and his own black history philosophy. More broadly, *Ebony's* coverage of the King Holiday highlighted the complexity of contrasting corporate, editorial and philosophical debates over the form and function of black history.

CHAPTER 1:

Tell Us Of Our Past: *Ebony* Magazine, Civil Rights and the Turn Toward Black History

In September 1963 *Ebony* published a landmark special issue on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. This special marked the culmination of an editorial turn toward black history which had crystallised during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and which can be understood as both a response to and an engagement with the rise of the modern civil rights movement. As Vincent Harding has argued, the ‘resurgence of interest in, the demand for and the writing of black history’ during this period was intimately connected to the struggle for racial equality on both a local and national scale. As the civil rights movement gained momentum, activists looked to better ‘define themselves, their future and their understanding of their past.’¹²⁴

This chapter charts this turn toward black history by *Ebony*, and the central role played in it by Lerone Bennett, Jr. *Ebony*’s expanding historical coverage highlighted an increasing demand for black history from the magazine’s editors and readers, but also Johnson’s understanding of how the past could serve to politicise the present. The impact of the Freedom Rides in 1961, and the rising influence of groups such as the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), had pushed the struggle for civil rights in a more radical direction.¹²⁵ In a similar vein, a new wave of ‘little black magazines’ emerged during the first half of the

¹²⁴ Harding, “Power From Our People,” 40.

¹²⁵ Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-10; Philip A. Goduti, *Robert F. Kennedy and the Shaping of Civil Rights, 1960-1964* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2012), 28-30; Wesley C. Hogan, *One Heart, Many Minds: SNCC’s Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

1960s, which frequently positioned *Ebony* as a symbol for the more cautious philosophy of middle-class and middle-aged black activists and white racial liberals.¹²⁶ The promotion of Bennett to the forefront of *Ebony*'s editorial content provided a key line of defence against individuals, organisations and publications which questioned its relevance to the struggle for racial equality.

Ebony's Early Historical Coverage

It is important to note that *Ebony* had published a range of historically themed articles prior to Bennett joining the magazine during the mid-1950s. This coverage had taken a number of forms, but in keeping with the magazine's underlying prerogative to celebrate black achievement, had centred on a liberal individualist approach to black history. For example, in response to the centennial of the Californian Gold Rush in 1949, *Ebony* noted that 'virtually nothing is being said by state officials about the remarkable negro pioneers who helped to write history in California', before going on to name and celebrate figures such as James Beckwourth.¹²⁷ While certainly not comprehensive, *Ebony*'s early historical coverage was commendably diverse, and was complemented by features such as 'This Week in Negro History' in *Jet*, following the latter's introduction in 1951.¹²⁸

Two editors who were heavily involved in *Ebony*'s early historical coverage were Allan Morrison and Era Bell Thompson. Morrison, who had worked briefly for *Ebony* in Chicago and would go on to become its New York

¹²⁶ Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics*, 167-168.

¹²⁷ "California Centennial," *Ebony*, November 1949, 28.

¹²⁸ "America's Oldest Negro Community," *Ebony*, February 1952, 42; "Juneteenth," *Ebony*, June 1951, 27-28; "Monument to Two Greats," *Ebony*, September 1946, 35-39; "The Roberts Settlement," *Ebony*, November 1951, 40-41; "This Week in Negro History," *Jet*, 1 November 1951, 13; "Vacation in Haiti," *Ebony*, July 1948, 52-56; Woodson, "The 15 Outstanding Events in Negro History," *Ebony*, February 1950, 42; "Yesterday In Negro History," *Ebony*, 14 February 1952, 9.

editor, would frequently use the Schomburg branch of New York Public Library for his research.¹²⁹ However, his longstanding efforts to get a story on the Schomburg's collections printed in *Ebony* were evidence of the relative lack of importance placed on black history during the magazine's early years.¹³⁰ From a different perspective, Thompson played an important role in pushing the magazine toward a more diasporic understanding of black history.¹³¹ Born and raised in North Dakota, Thompson came to literary prominence following the publication of *American Daughter* in 1946.¹³² Shortly after the book's publication she joined JPC, where she became one of *Ebony*'s most influential editors and a pioneering black foreign correspondent. Her articles for *Ebony* routinely drew connections between African Americans and the black diaspora; a position strengthened by the publication of her second book *Africa: Land of my Fathers* in 1954.¹³³

The role of Thompson also highlighted tensions within *Ebony*'s coverage of black history; tensions which would become increasingly evident during the 1960s and 1970s. Through personal correspondence with Johnson, Thompson noted a divide between the magazine's advertising and editorial divisions over representations of black history. In response to a 1955 memo from advertising executive William Grayson, which expressed concern that elements of the magazine's editorial content might offend advertisers, Thompson retorted that 'we in the editorial department are even more concerned about offending our

¹²⁹ Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 97; Resume, Box 1, Allan Malcolm Morrison Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York, NY.

¹³⁰ Suzanne Hildenbrand, *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women in* (Norwood: Ablex Publishing, 1996), 43.

¹³¹ Thompson, "What Africans Think About Us," *Ebony*, February 1954, 37.

¹³² Era Bell Thompson, *American Daughter* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946).

¹³³ Bibliography, Box 2, Ben Burns Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL.; Thompson, "What Africans Think About Us," *Ebony*, February 1954, 37; Thompson, *Africa: Land of My Fathers* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1954).

readers.’ As an example, she highlighted the ‘continued flagrant use of Negro historical greats’ in an advertising campaign by Schinley Whiskey.¹³⁴

Relatedly, *Ebony*’s early historical coverage played on the idea of a black history as a ‘living history’ which Bennett would later develop. On a literal level, this was explored through profiles on or by figures such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Richard R. Wright, whose own experiences were presented as a ‘living embodiment of black advancement.’¹³⁵ From a more philosophical perspective, *Ebony* called for a respect of the ‘untiring efforts’ of black historians such as Woodson, and criticised those who considered Negro History Week to be an irrelevance. In a photo-editorial from 1953, *Ebony* contended that whilst many blacks complained about a lack of racial pride, ‘much of what they are looking for is encompassed in the spirit of negro history week and the still living words of negro greats.’¹³⁶ Around the same time as this photo-editorial was published, Bennett joined JPC, where he worked initially for *Jet* before joining the editorial staff of *Ebony*.¹³⁷

Like Johnson, Bennett was a son of the South – born in Clarksdale, Mississippi and raised in the state capital of Jackson.¹³⁸ However, while Johnson had moved from Arkansas to Chicago as a child, Bennett remained in the South to complete his high school education before attending Morehouse

¹³⁴ Era Bell Thompson to John Johnson, 8 June 1955, Box 1, Era Bell Thompson Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL.; “Schenley,” *Ebony*, November 1954, 127; “Schenley,” *Ebony*, December 1954, 105.

¹³⁵ Mary Church Terrell, “I Remember Frederick Douglass,” *Ebony*, October 1953, 72; “Slave to Banker,” in *Ebony and American Business: a Thirty-Five Year History, 1945-1980* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1980), 13-17.

¹³⁶ ‘The Legacy of Our Negro Greats’, *Ebony*, February 1953, 88.

¹³⁷ Biographical Sketch, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

¹³⁸ Birth Certificate, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

College in Atlanta.¹³⁹ At Morehouse he excelled, serving on the student council as sophomore and junior class presidents, president of the Delta Phi Delta Journalistic Society, and as editor of the student newspaper and class yearbook.¹⁴⁰ In recognition of his achievements, Bennett was elected by Morehouse to appear in the 1948-1949 edition of *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges*.¹⁴¹ His time at Morehouse was deeply influenced by Benjamin Mays, the institution's president and iconic leader who became as a key facilitator of the modern civil rights struggle.¹⁴²

Bennett's move to an editorial position at *Ebony* roughly coincided with the removal of Ben Burns, and can be seen as part of an attempt to shift the magazine away from the more sensationalised content which had characterised its early years. While the two figures only worked together briefly, Bennett left a lasting impression on Burns before the latter's sudden dismissal. In drafts of his later autobiography, the white Chicagoan editor eviscerated JPC editors such as Herbert Nipson, who was criticised for his 'turgid copy, lack of fresh ideas, and uninspired editorial style.'¹⁴³ By contrast, Burns spoke highly of the 'soft spoken, genteel, but highly militant' Bennett, and noted that he would go on to become the company's resident history buff following his arrival from the *Atlanta World*.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Bennett was arguably the first journalist to seriously profile the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings for a popular

¹³⁹ James B. Lloyd, *Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817-1967* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1981), 29-31.

¹⁴⁰ Biographical Sketch, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers; Torch Yearbook, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

¹⁴¹ Certificate of Acceptance, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

¹⁴² Bennett, "Benjamin Elijah Mays," 73.

¹⁴³ *Ebony* Staff material, Box 9, Ben Burns Papers.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

audience.¹⁴⁵ A year after the publication of *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book* in 1953, Bennett contributed an article to *Ebony* titled 'Thomas Jefferson's Negro Grandchildren', in which he explored the claims made by black descendants of Joseph Fossett that Thomas Jefferson had been Fossett's father.¹⁴⁶

This shift also included new projects such as the *Ebony* Hall of Fame, which was created in November 1955. *Ebony* declared that this 'unique historical gallery', which was to be housed in the JPC headquarters at 1820 South Michigan Avenue in Chicago, would serve as a physical tribute to the achievements of notable black pioneers.¹⁴⁷ The magazine inaugurated the Hall of Fame with the induction of ten black pioneers, and an open invitation for readers to visit the display, 'which will include photographs, mementos and historical documents.'¹⁴⁸ *Ebony* announced that future inductees into the Hall of Fame would be democratically chosen by the magazine's readership, and would be unveiled every February to coincide with the observation of Negro History Week.¹⁴⁹ The first inductee in February 1956 was Madame C. J. Walker, who garnered 60 percent of reader votes.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, this period marked an apparent shift in *Ebony's* content toward a more proactive engagement with the struggle for racial equality. Through photo-editorials such as 'Is the Negro Happy?' in December 1953, *Ebony* had

¹⁴⁵ Lucia C. Stanton, "Those Who Labor For My Happiness: Thomas Jefferson and his Slaves," in *Jeffersonian Legacies*, ed. Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 172.

¹⁴⁶ Bennett, "Thomas Jefferson's Negro Grandchildren," *Ebony*, November 1954, 78-80; Edwin M. Betts, *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book: with Commentary and Relevant Extracts From Other Writings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

¹⁴⁷ "Ebony Hall of Fame," *Ebony*, November 1955, 149.

¹⁴⁸ The first figures to be inducted into the *Ebony* Hall of Fame were Mary McLeod Bethune, George Washington Carver, Walter White, Booker T. Washington, Daniel Hale Williams, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Banneker, Sojourner Truth and Crispus Attucks.

¹⁴⁹ "Ebony Hall of Fame," *Ebony*, November 1955, 149; "Backstage," *Ebony*, December 1957, 16.

¹⁵⁰ "Ebony Hall of Fame," *Ebony*, February 1956, 25.

offered a go-slow approach to civil rights. This article suggested that ‘although the common conception that all negroes are happy is a preposterous one, the saying that it takes very little to make them happy is quite true.’¹⁵¹ However, the impact of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the outrage generated by the brutal murder of Emmett Till, and the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, all helped to push Johnson’s hand.¹⁵² Less than two years after the publication of “Is the Negro Happy?” *Ebony* printed an article which declared that ‘today in Dixie there is emerging a new militant negro. He is a fearless, fighting man who openly campaigns for his civil rights.’¹⁵³ Bennett and Simeon Booker were just two JPC staffers who undertook risky reporting southern assignments during the 1950s, where they were frequently assumed to be ‘northern meddlers’ and met with hostility.¹⁵⁴

Ebony also pushed for eye-catching collaborations with prominent civil rights activists.¹⁵⁵ The most notable came from Martin Luther King, who began writing an advice column for *Ebony* in September 1957.¹⁵⁶ King had graduated from Morehouse the year before Bennett, and the editor helped to foster King’s interest in the prospect of becoming a regular contributor.¹⁵⁷ *Ebony* contended that the column, titled ‘Advice for Living’, would speak to a range of social and political issues, and would ‘help the Negro solve his problems.’¹⁵⁸ Bennett facilitated the column through correspondence with King by sending him reader

¹⁵¹ “Is the Negro Happy?,” *Ebony*, December 1953, 132.

¹⁵² Booker, *Shocking the Conscience*, 49-83; Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 143-163.

¹⁵³ “The New Fighting South,” *Ebony*, August 1955, 69-71.

¹⁵⁴ Bennett, “The Negro and the South,” *Ebony*, April 1957, 76-81; Booker, *Shocking the Conscience*, 102-104; Southern Trip, Box 4, Ben Burns Papers.

¹⁵⁵ Medgar Evers, “Why I Live in Mississippi,” *Ebony*, November 1958, 65-70; “The Fighting Jacksons,” *Ebony*, October 1956, 17-24.

¹⁵⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Advice for Living,” *Ebony*, September 1957, 53.

¹⁵⁷ Clayborne Carson et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Volume IV: Symbol of the Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 267.

¹⁵⁸ JPC Inter Office Communication, 9 August 1957, Box 2, Lerone Bennett Papers.

questions, and editing the minister's responses into a finished article.¹⁵⁹ This role as an intermediary would continue through subsequent features such as a personal account of King's travel to India, which was published in July 1959.¹⁶⁰

We've All Come a Long Way

Both the *Ebony* Hall of Fame and King's 'Advice for Living' column were ultimately short-lived ventures. King's column was curtailed at the end of 1958, and despite promises that in its place King would author a new page on 'national affairs and human relations', this feature failed to materialise.¹⁶¹ Coverage of the Hall of Fame continued until the end of 1959, after which date all mention of the project was discarded.¹⁶² Furthermore, critics such as A. James Reichley have suggested that *Ebony* continued to 'soft-pedal civil rights well into the fifties', and that while its civil rights coverage certainly expanded, this was largely in keeping with other major photo-editorial magazines such as *Life*.¹⁶³ However, projects such as the Hall of Fame and King's 'Advice for Living' column demonstrated that *Ebony* was attempting to engage with both of these topics in new and more comprehensive ways.

These trends fed into the growing editorial influence of Bennett, who by the end of the 1950s had emerged as one of the magazine's most prominent contributors. This was consolidated by Johnson's awareness of his readers growing interest in black history, which encouraged him to promote Bennett's

¹⁵⁹ Carson et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Volume IV*, 267.

¹⁶⁰ Carson et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Volume V: Threshold of a New Decade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 231; King, "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi," *Ebony*, July 1959, 84-92.

¹⁶¹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, January 1959, 14.

¹⁶² "Backstage," *Ebony*, December 1959, 25; "Ebony Hall of Fame," *Ebony*, February 1959, 61-63.

¹⁶³ A. James Reichley, "How John Johnson Made It," *Fortune*, January 1968, 180; Saddler, "A Content Analysis of *Ebony's* and *Life's* 1955-1965 Reporting," 61-63.

discussion of black history, and the relevance of that history to the present.¹⁶⁴ In addition, Bennett was not the only editor pushing for more articles on black history, with Thompson in particular expressing dissatisfaction at the magazine's insufficient historical coverage. In a 1959 letter to Johnson which threatened her resignation, Thompson put forward a series of demands that included a call for more 'profiles of great Negroes', and the publication of a black history quarterly.¹⁶⁵

Bennett's engagement with black history can also be seen as an important catalyst for expanding civil rights coverage within *Ebony*. The intersections of black history and the modern struggle for civil rights were demonstrated through a series of articles by Bennett during the 1960s. The first of these articles, titled 'The Ghost of Marcus Garvey', argued that Garvey's legacy was central to the rising prominence of black nationalist groups in the United States. Looking to link broader shifts in the pattern of diasporic black activism across both time and space, Bennett opened his account with the words of three geographically disparate figures united by a common support for Garvey's philosophy. From her home in Jamaica, Amy Jacques Garvey articulated that Garvey was 'no fool', and that American blacks 'will find out that he was right.' In London, Garvey's first wife Amy Ashwood contended that 'the seeds he scattered in the 1920s are beginning to bear fruit.' On the South Side of Chicago, an elderly man of West Indian descent announced that Garvey was right; 'no one is going to help the black mahn but the black mahn.'¹⁶⁶

Through utilising the words of his ex-wives, Bennett connected Garvey's black nationalist philosophy to more recent historical and literary developments,

¹⁶⁴ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 287.

¹⁶⁵ Era Bell Thompson to John H. Johnson, 26 June 1959, Box 1, Era Bell Thompson Papers.

¹⁶⁶ Bennett, "The Ghost of Marcus Garvey," *Ebony*, March 1960, 53

positioning Garvey as a central influence over the black nationalist revival of the early 1960s. Critically, Amy Jacques Garvey and Amy Ashwood became the mediums through which his message could be relayed, as both a testament to Garvey's legacy and his enduring power as a form of 'living history.' Bennett informed his readers that 'few things are more alive to Amy Jacques Garvey than her late husband.'¹⁶⁷ His article was by no means a hagiography – Bennett documented the weaknesses of Garvey as expressed through his ex-wives, such as his vanity and fastidious showmanship. Yet he concluded by reiterating Garvey's importance as a 'Black Moses' who helped to lead blacks toward the 'Promised Land.'¹⁶⁸

Two issues later, *Ebony* published a piece titled 'The Revolt of the Negro Youth', which did not have a named author but carried many of Bennett's rhetorical flourishes.¹⁶⁹ Dismissing the criticisms of black intellectuals who argued that the black American student was a 'social adolescent', the feature demonstrated the awareness of and deference to black history by younger activists. Students such as Joseph McNeil, one of the Greensboro Four, argued for a departure from the 'acquiescent leadership' of older campaigners. For McNeal, senior campaigners were seen to 'follow the methods of Booker T. Washington', whereas younger activists favoured the teachings of Du Bois.¹⁷⁰ Bennett argued that by speaking 'from conscience to conscience', the sit-in generation were directly linked to the struggles of their enslaved ancestors.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 54.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶⁹ "The Revolt of Negro Youth," *Ebony*, May 1960, 36.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹⁷¹ Bennett, "What Sit-Downs Mean to America," *Ebony*, June 1960, 36.

In July 1960 Bennett contributed his most militant article to date, through a searing indictment of the South African state.¹⁷² *Ebony* previewed the article a month prior to its publication, describing it as a 'look into the grimy, sordid situation in the Union of South Africa, where bloodshed and oppression walk hand in hand with apartheid.'¹⁷³ Bennett warned that of a 'Day of Blood' that was quickly approaching for both native black Africans and white settlers, which had two contrasting but equally violent outcomes.¹⁷⁴ In the first scenario, Bennett imagined how 'the African, goaded beyond endurance, hurls himself at his tormentor and is mowed down by tanks and machine guns.' In the second, he envisioned black Africans hurling 'the white man into the sea.'¹⁷⁵

Bennett did not make an explicit comparison between the apartheid regime in South Africa and the continuing impact of segregation at home, but this link was impossible to ignore. Similarly, other editorials looked to contrast the fortunes of the African diaspora with the ongoing struggle for racial equality in the United States. Just a few months before Bennett's Sharpeville article, *Ebony* had published a photo-editorial titled 'Let My People Go', which highlighted the ironies of Thurgood Marshall's role in helping Kenyan leaders draft constitutional safeguards for the civil rights of white citizens. The magazine contended that while African decolonisation efforts surged ahead, 'American democracy slows down to a piddlin' pace.'¹⁷⁶

The July 1960 issue of *Ebony* which featured Bennett's article on South Africa was also a watershed for another reason – it formalised Bennett's promotion to a position as the magazine's senior editor. A number of sources,

¹⁷² Bennett, "South Africa: the Handwriting on the Wall," *Ebony*, July 1960, 27.

¹⁷³ The article marked one of the first times the magazine had printed explicit images of white-on-black violence and police brutality since the 1946 Columbia Race Riot. "Backstage," *Ebony*, June 1960, 22; Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 95-96.

¹⁷⁴ Bennett, "South Africa," 27.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷⁶ "Let My People Go," *Ebony*, April 1960, 90.

including Bennett himself, would later posit that he had taken up this position in 1958.¹⁷⁷ However, at least within the pages of JPC periodicals, this role would not be officially announced until the middle of 1960. In the 'Backstage' feature of *Ebony* in July 1960, the magazine described a champagne toast among its editorial team to mark Bennett's new role as *Ebony*'s 'first senior editor.' After a fellow staffer jokingly congratulated Bennett on having made it a long way from Mississippi, *Ebony*'s new senior editor surveyed the room and reportedly declared; 'we've all come a long way.'¹⁷⁸

The magazine mused that Bennett could have been talking about his days as a Morehouse student, or even his birthplace in Clarksdale, just as *Ebony* publisher Johnson could vividly recall the poverty of Arkansas City. However, it explicitly connected Bennett's new editorial position to both his own historical consciousness and the shifting struggle for racial equality at home and abroad. It contended that Bennett was 'thinking of "a long way" in more than just time and space', but also in relation to a black political awakening in the American and the Global South.¹⁷⁹ Through presenting Bennett's promotion in this way, *Ebony* clearly situated him as a key figure in the magazine's turn toward a more critical analysis of black life – not only in relation to 'where the Negro is going in the world today' but with regards to where black people had been in the past.¹⁸⁰

Tell Us Of Our Past

A year after Bennett's Sharpeville article, *Ebony* returned to the intersections of time and space to outline the start of the editor's major new

¹⁷⁷ Biographical Sketch, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

¹⁷⁸ "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1960, 24.

¹⁷⁹ "Nigeria Unshackled," *Ebony*, October 1960, 25; Thompson, "African Independence 1960," *Ebony*, December 1960, 144.

¹⁸⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1960, 24.

'Negro History' series. Like previous 'Backstage' features, *Ebony* connected the development of its historical content with a newfound commitment to serious political and civil rights issues. It linked the 'distance in space' travelled by co-managing editor Herbert Nipson as part of a press group accompanying vice-President Johnson to Southeast Asia to the 'distances in time' Bennett would travel in his new black history feature.¹⁸¹ *Ebony* also noted that the series have been brought about in part by the demands for historical coverage emanating from its readers.

Teachers, pupils, businessmen and housewives, professionals and laborers, have all written to us asking that we "tell us of our past." Negro Americans are anxious to learn not only of their contributions to American history but of the life of their ancestors in Africa. They ask for roots that go beyond the slave plantation of the South and the first slave ship that touched these shores.¹⁸²

In pointing toward a more diasporic understanding of black history, this statement reflected broader shifts in the content and coverage in black American magazines. The resurrection of *Negro Digest* and the introduction of new magazines such as *Freedomways* and *Liberator* in 1961 were all linked by an effort to place diasporic concerns at the centre of their respective coverage.¹⁸³ During the first months following its revival, *Negro Digest* featured a bevy of articles which focused on African culture, politics and society.¹⁸⁴ This diasporic identity was articulated even more explicitly in *Freedomways*, which sought to provide 'a means of examining experiences and strengthening the

¹⁸¹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1961, 22.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸³ Clovis E. Semmes, *Roots of Afrocentric Thought: a Reference Guide to Negro Digest/Black World* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), xii.

¹⁸⁴ "Agony in Angola," *Negro Digest*, February 1962, 42-51; "Julius Nyerere: East African Moderate," *Negro Digest*, March 1962, 31-37; Mokwugo Okoye, "Inside Nigeria," *Negro Digest*, January 1962, 3-8; Peter Ritner, "A Voice Crying in the South African Wilderness," *Negro Digest*, December 1961, 3-7; "The South African Underground," *Negro Digest*, March 1962, 61-66; Sekou Toure, "What Colonialism Did To Africa," 8-14.

relationship among peoples of African descent in this country, in Latin America, and wherever there are communities of such people anywhere in the world.’¹⁸⁵

The first article in Bennett’s ‘Negro History’ series, titled ‘The African Past’, outlined his desire to reclaim a proud African ancestry from popular conceptions of the ‘Dark Continent.’¹⁸⁶ Opening with a stanza from the Countee Cullen poem ‘Heritage’, Bennett demanded new respect for the ‘strong bronzed men and regal black women’ who had built powerful African Empires prior to the rise of the New World.¹⁸⁷ Instructing his readers on the central role played by Africa in the birth of modern civilisation, Bennett introduced them to the work of scholars such as Franz Boaz, Melville J. Herskovits and John Hope Franklin, and also provided them with a list of books to develop their knowledge further.¹⁸⁸ In looking to project new scholarly appraisals of Africa onto a mass audience, and to parallel these with the impact of independence movements in Africa, Bennett’s writing fed into a ‘generational reworking of the past/present in black collective identity-formation.’¹⁸⁹

This focus on historical recovery was continued in the second article of the series titled ‘Before the Mayflower’, where Bennett delved into the development of the transatlantic slave trade. Although the bulk of Bennett’s article focused on the horrors of slavery as an institution, he took pains to state that the first blacks to arrive in America were not slaves.¹⁹⁰ For Bennett, this distinction carried tremendous moral and psychological implications in helping

¹⁸⁵ “It’s A Journal!,” *Freedomways*, Spring 1961, 9.

¹⁸⁶ “*Ebony* Launches Series on Negro History,” *Jet*, 13 July 1961, 48.

¹⁸⁷ Bennett, “The African Past,” 34.

¹⁸⁸ Recommendations included Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959); Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1939); John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: a History of Negro Americans* (New York: Knopf, 1947); Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958); Paul Radin, *African Folktales and Sculptures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

¹⁸⁹ Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2001), 178-179.

¹⁹⁰ Bennett, “Before the Mayflower,” *Ebony*, September 1961, 32.

to shift the paradigm of black life in America from one predicated on servitude to one based on freedom. By making this assertion, Bennett reiterated the sentiments of earlier historians such as Joel Augustus Rogers, who had emphasised the role of black ancestors in the nation's formation.¹⁹¹

Relatedly, Bennett made an explicit attempt to humanise the black experience in slavery and in freedom. He focused on the individual examples of Captain Tomba, who led a revolt on a slave ship and killed three sailors before being subdued, and Nealee, an enslaved woman who was left to die after falling ill in a slave caravan.¹⁹² Through such stories, Bennett grounded the black experience of slavery not only in suffering, but fierce resistance. Furthermore, by naming specific men and women, Bennett aimed to bring slavery to life in the minds of his audience – a point noted by *Ebony's* readers, who praised Bennett's series for getting 'closer to America's part in slavery' than many previous history texts.¹⁹³ These efforts were continued through articles such as 'The Negro in the American Revolution', 'Behind the Cotton Curtain' and 'Slave Revolts and Insurrections', which looked to centralise the historical role and significance of figures such as Crispus Attucks at the Boston Massacre.¹⁹⁴ Far from presenting Attucks as simply an unlucky bystander or inconsequential dockworker, Bennett emphasised his role as a leader of men – 'bold, fearless and commanding. When he spoke, men listened. When he commanded, men acted.'¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Clare Corbould, *Becoming African Americans: Black Public Life in Harlem, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 41.

¹⁹² Bennett, "Before the Mayflower," 33.

¹⁹³ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, January 1962, 12.

¹⁹⁴ Bennett, "Behind the Cotton Curtain," *Ebony*, January 1962, 82-90; Bennett, "The Negro in the American Revolution," *Ebony*, November 1961, 89-100; Bennett, "Slave Revolts and Insurrections," *Ebony*, February 1962, 82-90.

¹⁹⁵ Bennett, "The Negro in the American Revolution," 90.

Just as Bennett had stressed the horrors of the transatlantic trade, so too did he seek to destroy the romanticised image of the slave plantation promoted by pro-slavery apologists. He reminded readers that slavery was a system which was shaped by systemic sexual, physical and psychological violence, and which left a heavy toll on both the oppressed and the oppressor.¹⁹⁶ However, he also attacked the image of the 'docile slave' peddled by historians such as Ulrich B. Phillips to champion the enslaved as dangerous, ingenious and frequently fearless.¹⁹⁷ He painted Nat Turner as a Christ-like figure, describing him as 'The Prophet', and contending that he 'found food for insurrection in the Bible.'¹⁹⁸ Though descriptions of 'sit-down strikes' orchestrated by enslaved blacks, Bennett's rhetoric connected historic strategies to combat white supremacy and racial violence to the tactics of the modern civil rights movement.¹⁹⁹ Relatedly, the editor opened his article on slave revolts and insurrections by declaring that 'it was a long hot summer' on the eve of the Haitian Revolution in 1791.²⁰⁰

Bennett brought to his 'Negro History' series the same conceptualisation of living history which had helped to frame his discussion of activists such as Garvey. This was achieved not only through the rhetorical parallels he drew between the Haitian Revolution and the 'long hot summer' of 1961, or the actions of abolitionists as 'a cold war against slavery', but also through efforts to impress upon readers their own links to the past.²⁰¹ Accordingly, Bennett's

¹⁹⁶ Bennett, "Behind the Cotton Curtain," 82.

¹⁹⁷ Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: a Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1918), 340–342.

¹⁹⁸ Bennett, "Slave Revolts and Insurrections," 89-90.

¹⁹⁹ Bennett, "Behind the Cotton Curtain," 90.

²⁰⁰ Bennett, "Slave Revolts and Insurrections," 82.

²⁰¹ Bennett, "Generation of Crisis," *Ebony*, May 1962, 81; Sara Mitchell Parsons, *From Southern Wrongs to Civil Rights: the Memoir of a White Civil Rights Activist* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 41.

articulation of black history as a living history encouraged his readers to 'consider their history in a new way, their current struggle from a new perspective', and the relationship between the two.²⁰² In turn, the responses of the magazine's readers to his series played an important role in developing Bennett's understanding of black history as a 'perpetual conversation.'²⁰³

Ebony routinely stressed the role of its 'Letters to the Editor' as 'an open forum where readers had a chance to air their views', and readers praised the section for giving them not only the chance to comment on the magazine's content, but also 'the opportunity to exchange ideas with each other, using *Ebony* as a medium.'²⁰⁴ In addition to providing readers with the chance to offer feedback on the magazine's historical coverage, *Ebony*'s 'Letters to the Editor' section offered them the opportunity to place themselves into the ongoing dialogue between the black past and present envisioned by Bennett.²⁰⁵ Some did this by taking up Bennett's own rhetorical flourishes to connect different epochs of black history. One reader celebrated the historical significance of the sit-ins by connecting them directly to the imagery of the slave ship, likening the quest for black equality to 'an ocean voyage across a stormy sea.' They argued that 'when four young Negroes walked into a southern restaurant and asked to be served, the first mass exodus of Negroes from the boat began.'²⁰⁶

Other readers took this role one step further by inserting themselves directly into this conversation. In response to Bennett's article 'Behind the Cotton Curtain', Amelia Jacobs recalled how a similar story of slavery told by Bennett in 'Under the Cotton Curtain' had also been relayed by her grandaunt.

²⁰² Harding, "Power From Our People," 49.

²⁰³ Bennett, "A Living History," 27.

²⁰⁴ "Backstage," *Ebony*, May 1952, 14; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1947, 4.

²⁰⁵ Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 92.

²⁰⁶ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, September 1960, 18.

Jacobs connected Bennett's descriptions of slave resistance to her grandaunt's own memories of secret meetings and white retaliation. She mused that 'it would take volumes for the descendants of slaves to write some of the things told us by former slaves themselves.'²⁰⁷ The following month Nancy Bell responded to Bennett's coverage of slave revolts by situating herself as the embodiment of his understanding of a living history. Bell informed *Ebony* that she was 'the great granddaughter of one of the four disciples of Nat Turner, namely: Nelson Williams' and reassured Bennett that 'I am still following in his footsteps in every way I can to continue to help liberate our people.'²⁰⁸

Foregrounding History as Corporate Responsibility

For the first time in his *Ebony* career, Bennett's series offered the editor a sustained platform from which he could emphasise the importance of black history. While many of his previous articles had been well received, the decision to produce a black history series built reader excitement over a period of months. This sense of coalescing momentum or significance was actively encouraged by *Ebony*, which routinely previewed the next instalment of Bennett's series in 'Backstage' and celebrated its impact as 'one of the best-received features the magazine has ever printed.'²⁰⁹ By making a conscious effort to cite a range of historians and scholars throughout his 'Negro History' series, Bennett helped to bring the work of academic writers to a mass audience. While his writing largely reiterated the assertions of historians such as Benjamin Quarles, its reach was positively revolutionary.²¹⁰ Quarles has argued that *Ebony*'s popularisation of black history 'left a deep imprint on

²⁰⁷ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, April 1962, 16-17.

²⁰⁸ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, May 1962, 17.

²⁰⁹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1961, 24.

²¹⁰ Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1961); Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953).

hundreds of thousands of readers hitherto unresponsive to the call of the past.²¹¹ If anything, this was a conservative estimate. By the end of Bennett's series *Ebony's* circulation was approaching three-quarters of a million, and, with an estimated pass-on readership of 5 people per copy, garnered a monthly audience in excess of 3 million.²¹² Based on these numbers, Korey Bowers Brown has argued that *Ebony* could lay claim to a bigger audience than 'any single black history text' previously published.²¹³

Perhaps more importantly, Bennett's black history series served as evidence of *Ebony's* awareness of and receptiveness to the historical demands of its audience, and offered an important counter-balance to criticisms of the magazine's role in or relevance to the black freedom struggle. Frazier's censure of *Ebony* as a vehicle of wish fulfilment for the black middle class was taken up by a new generation of black periodicals which emerged from the start of the 1960s. As Bennett acknowledged in his introduction to 'What Sit-Downs Mean to America', the talk of 'America's spiritual flabbiness, lack of purpose and loss of nerve' was evident on both the college campus and the pages of the 'little magazines.'²¹⁴ As support for the 'go-slow' philosophy of older civil rights leaders waned, so too did the influence and circulation of older black periodicals dwindle. Into this space emerged a new wave of 'little black magazines' which included *Black Dialogue*, *Freedomways*, *Liberator*, *Soulbook* and *Umbra*.²¹⁵

While more venerable black periodicals such as *The Crisis* had generally avoided attacking specific black publications, many younger writers and editors

²¹¹ Quarles, *Black Mosaic: Essays in Afro-American History and Historiography* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 181.

²¹² "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1962, 19; "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1963, 26; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, December 1962, 20;

²¹³ Brown, "Souled Out," 81.

²¹⁴ Bennett, "What Sit-Downs Mean To America," 35.

²¹⁵ Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics*, 161.

were more eager to hold 'unworthy' literature to account.²¹⁶ This was particularly true of commercial black magazines, which were seen to have sacrificed their commitment to black America in favour of financial gain. As Ronald Johnson and Abby Johnson have recognised, many of the little black magazines which emerged during the 1960s believed that *Ebony* was 'headed distinctly in the wrong direction, straight into the pockets of white businessmen profiting off the delusions of many Afro-Americans.'²¹⁷ While the strongest of such criticisms would not emerge until the second half of the 1960s, these tensions were already simmering at the start of the decade.

One way in which Johnson responded to this pressure was through the reintroduction of *Negro Digest* in 1961, which in its second incarnation moved far beyond its original function as 'a black version of *Readers Digest*.'²¹⁸ Johnson was able to coax Hoyt Fuller back to JPC, who had left the company in 1957 due to frustration at *Ebony*'s lack of civil rights coverage, and had travelled extensively in Europe and Africa during the late 1950s.²¹⁹ Fuller transformed *Negro Digest* into a leftist intellectual journal that would become a vibrant space for black activists, artists and intellectuals.²²⁰ Its popularity among more militant activists arguably helped to temper criticisms of JPC as a whole. For figures such as Larry Neal, the value of *Negro Digest* would ultimately help to offset some (although not all) of the excesses promoted by *Ebony* and *Jet*. Neal

²¹⁶ *Negro World* was arguably an exception to this rule, stemming from the personal feud between Du Bois and Garvey.

²¹⁷ Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics*, 167.

²¹⁸ Ingham and Feldman, *African American Business Leaders*, 371.

²¹⁹ Curriculum Vitae, Box 6, Hoyt Fuller Papers, Clark Atlanta University, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Special Collections, Atlanta, GA; Fenderson, "Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic," 36-37.

²²⁰ Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 207-210.

advised that instead of attacking JPC, critics should pressure the company 'to publish meaningful work by deluging them with the best that we have.'²²¹

However, *Negro Digest's* hiatus between 1951 and 1961, and its relatively limited national circulation and exposure, helped to mediate its significant shift in its editorial and political philosophy.²²² Similarly, its lack of advertising meant that it was less beholden to the fears and reservations of corporate sponsors than either *Ebony* or *Jet*.²²³ To radicalise the content of *Ebony* in a similar way to *Negro Digest* would risk alienating the advertisers which generated the bulk of the magazine's capital. On the other hand, a failure to present a significant shift in the magazine's content would risk estranging its readers, who were becoming more politically engaged. This could deflate the magazine's circulation base, which would have equally serious financial repercussions owing to the circulation guarantees *Ebony* provided to its advertisers.²²⁴

As such, the connection made through Bennett's black historical articles between black historical resistance, black consciousness and the black freedom struggle presented a powerful counterargument to the representation of *Ebony* as an antithetical force in the struggle for black equality. Bennett's black history series offered a powerful reappraisal of the black past which appealed to the

²²¹ Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics*, 167.

²²² At its peak *Negro Digest* had 'perhaps the largest readership of any serious cultural journal in the United States', yet this was still dwarfed by *Ebony's* circulation and broader cultural impact. Jonathan Fenderson has pointed to documents from Hoyt Fuller's papers which suggest that up to 80,000 copies of *Negro Digest* were to be printed monthly, but the magazine's true circulation was closer to half of this figure. By contrast, *Ebony* raised its advertising circulation guarantee to 1 million in 1967. See "Backstage," *Ebony*, December 1965, 26; "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1967, 26; Fenderson, "Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic," 54; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Black World*, December 1972, 97; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Negro Digest*, November 1969, 78; Smethurst, *Black Arts Movement*, 208.

²²³ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 178-191.

²²⁴ When circulation guarantees had not been met due to the economic recession in the early 1950s, the magazine had almost gone under. Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 234-235.

'new-found militance' of the sit-in generation.²²⁵ Yet this content was less threatening to corporate advertisers than a wholesale shift in the magazine's editorial voice. In a similar vein, the emphasis on his series as a tool for historical recovery resonated with the desire of *Ebony's* readers to be provided with accurate information about black culture and history. The tone of Bennett's articles echoed the sentiments expressed in the first issue of *Freedomways*, which was published several months before his 'Negro History' series began.

"You shall know the Truth – and the Truth shall set you free!"

This is our precept. We invite historians, sociologists, economists, artists, workers, students – all who have something constructive to contribute in this search for TRUTH – to use this open channel of communication that we might unite and mobilize our efforts for worthy and lasting results.²²⁶

On a localised level, we can also read such shifts in *Ebony's* content against the developing intersections of black history and civil rights activism in Chicago. As national media attention shifted from an understanding of the struggle for civil rights as a primarily southern movement to a national battle for equality, entrenched systems of racial discrimination and segregation in northern cities came under closer scrutiny.²²⁷ The influx of southern black migrants into Chicago during the first half of the twentieth century had radically altered the demographic of the city, with the city's black population increasing from around 30,000 in 1900 to over 800,000 by 1960.²²⁸ However, this had also led to the entrenchment of systemic patterns of segregation and racial

²²⁵ Bennett, "What Sit-Downs Mean to America," 38.

²²⁶ Jackson, "Introduction," in *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in their Own Country*, ed. Esther Cooper Jackson and Constance Pohl (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), xx.

²²⁷ Jeanne Theoharis, "Introduction," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South: 1940-1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodward (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-5.

²²⁸ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 17.

inequality.²²⁹ A host of interconnected problems including restrictive housing covenants, high unemployment, municipal neglect and industrial restricting and decline prompted the Chicago Urban League and other organisations to begin a 'massive effort to end segregation and discrimination' in the Windy City.²³⁰

Parallel to these efforts came a push by black Chicagoans for a greater awareness of the longstanding black presence within their own city – starting with Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, Chicago's first permanent resident.²³¹ As a proud Chicago institution, *Ebony* looked to champion DuSable and other black pioneers such as Robert Abbott of the *Chicago Defender* as men who 'made and wrote Negro history.'²³² This interest had also fed into the formation of the DuSable Museum of African American History in 1961 by Margaret and Charles Burroughs.²³³ The opening of the DuSable was a milestone in the development of the post-war 'black museum movement' which included institutions such as the Afro-American Cultural and Historical Society Museum in Cleveland and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit.²³⁴ Andrea Burns has positioned the DuSable as an important 'neighborhood' museum which set important precedents for future African American museums, and

²²⁹ Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 23-26; James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); 163-166.

²³⁰ Bennett, "North's Hottest Fight For Integration," *Ebony*, March 1962, 31; John A. Kirk, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (London: Routledge, 2014), 102.

²³¹ Sidney Kaplan and Emma Nogrady Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), 163-165.

²³² Bennett, "Negro Who Founded Chicago," *Ebony*, December 1963, 172; Cloyte Murdock, "Robert Abbott," *Ebony*, June 1955, 69.

²³³ Odie Hawkins, *Black Chicago* (Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing, 1992), 16; Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era* (London: Routledge, 1996), 97-98.

²³⁴ John E. Fleming and Margaret T. Burroughs, "Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs: Artist, Teacher, Administrator, Writer, Political Activist, and Museum Founder," *The Public Historian* 21 (1999), 47.

mirrored the editorial efforts of *Ebony* to 'challenge and remedy the absence of African American history and culture from mainstream institutions.'²³⁵

Martin Luther King, Jr., Black History and the Mood of the Negro

During the summer of 1962, *Ebony*'s black history series made its way from the Revolutionary period to the Civil War, Reconstruction and the birth of Jim Crow.²³⁶ Against the backdrop of James Meredith's attempts to enrol at Ole Miss, Bennett celebrated the rise of 'Black Power in Dixie' and the influence of southern black politicians in the years following the civil war.²³⁷ Here the connections between the 1870s and the 1960s were stressed through the magazine's layout, with articles such as 'Negro Judgeships At Record High' immediately preceding Bennett's account of how black enfranchisement during Reconstruction had fostered a surge in black judges, representatives and senators.²³⁸

The sense of coalescing momentum around Bennett's series was reinforced by subtle editorial and formatting changes – halfway through the series *Ebony* began to minimise full page adverts that intersected with Bennett's articles. For a magazine so heavily reliant on advertising, it was highly unusual to see an editorial piece that didn't contain a full page advert.²³⁹ Bennett's articles also got progressively longer as the series progressed, and the final article in November 1961 marked the first cover dedicated to the series. An image of Martin Luther King was used to promote Bennett's final instalment,

²³⁵ Burns, *From Storefront to Monument*, 15

²³⁶ Bennett, "The Birth of Jim Crow," *Ebony*, August 1962, 104-113; Bennett, "Black Power in Dixie," *Ebony*, July 1962, 84-90; Bennett, "The Negro in the Civil War," *Ebony*, June 1962, 132-137.

²³⁷ Bennett, "Black Power in Dixie," 85; Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

²³⁸ "Negro Judgeships At Record High," *Ebony*, July 1962, 79.

²³⁹ This shift to the exclusion of full page adverts within Bennett's series came in May 1962, although the tenth instalment to his series in October 1962 did include full page ads – the only article in the second half of his series to do so.

titled 'From Booker T. to Martin L.', which marked the first time King had appeared on the magazine's cover.²⁴⁰

Ebony introduced the feature by substantiating King's role as a symbol for the 'tenor of the current civil rights battle', and positioning him alongside historical greats such as Douglass, Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.²⁴¹ Bennett offered an ambivalent portrayal of Washington, noting his unprecedented power and influence but criticising his 'refusal to make a direct and open attack on Jim Crow and his implicit acceptance of segregation.' By contrast, he was much more forthcoming in his praise of Du Bois as 'a throwback to the Frederick Douglass era of direct, militant action', and applauded the ability of the NAACP to merge 'the potent forces of white liberalism and Negro militancy.'²⁴²

Tracing the history of black protest in the twentieth century, Bennett noted *Ebony's* own role in 'the revolutionary re-appraisal which Negro America made of itself' during the years following World War II, before coming to focus on the figure of King.²⁴³ For Bennett, King's role was predicated on his unique ability to fuse existing philosophies for black advancement to the timeless power of the black church which had 'sustained and bottomed the Negro community since slavery.' In harnessing the unifying potential of black spiritualism as a historical constant, Bennett argued that King was able to transform a 'spontaneous racial protest into an awesome passive resistance movement.' As the spiritual descendent of Frederick Douglass, King was therefore central to the birth of a 'Second Reconstruction, a Reconstruction which ranges over

²⁴⁰ Bennett, "From Booker T. to Martin L.," *Ebony*, November 1962, 152-162.

²⁴¹ "Cover," *Ebony*, November 1962, 4.

²⁴² Bennett, "From Booker T. to Martin L.," 152.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 159.

North and South' and which was fostered by the efforts of 'militant men, women and children.'²⁴⁴

Bennett's increasing, and increasingly combative, coverage of the black past paralleled his descriptions of a new and more assertive mood among black activists in the present. These connections were confirmed through an editorial titled 'The Mood of the Negro', which placed an expanding awareness of black history at the centre of what Bennett described as a growing 'mood of blackness' during the early 1960s.²⁴⁵ Bennett contended that 'there is a growing gap between the Negro middle class and the Negro masses', and warned of a 'vast and potentially explosive emotional upheaval in the ghettos of America.'²⁴⁶ His article gained considerable exposure, and would form the basis of a 1963 Open Mind special on 'Race Relations in Crisis' hosted by Richard Heffner. Quoting from Bennett's article at length, Heffner led a panel discussion featuring Nation of Islam minister Malcolm X, CORE director James Farmer, SCLC chief of staff Wyatt Tee Walker, and *Ebony's* own Allan Morrison.²⁴⁷

Bennett's article explicitly outlined the class and generational tensions which appeared to underpin the new 'mood of militancy', but also highlighted the importance of black history as a unifying force. He noted that black leaders from all backgrounds were becoming 'increasingly sophisticated in the art of using the symbols of the past to unify men and children around a common goal.' Accordingly, while the new 'mood of the negro' had created tensions and even fractures within the civil rights movement, it had also helped to usher in a conscious identification with the black past. As a result, 'long-neglected heroes

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 161.

²⁴⁵ Bennett, "The Mood of the Negro," *Ebony*, July 1963, 27.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 32.

²⁴⁷ "Open Mind Round Table with Malcolm X, James Farmer, Wyatt T. Walker and Allan Morrison," YouTube Video, 1: 58:49, posted by "Donnie Mossberg," 4 December 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9cIPdt9y2w>.

and heroines' such as Douglass, Crispus Attucks and Sojourner Truth were being 'dusted off and held up as models of courage and inspiration.'²⁴⁸

Ebony's coverage of King in particular demonstrated how important history was as a method or strategy for connecting black activists. Bennett tied the 'militant look backwards' to King's 'doctrine of debt' which was predicated on a recognition of the moral and historical weight levied by centuries of racial injustice. As Tony Atwater has argued, *Ebony's* focus on King was a key aspect of its attempts to mirror growing support for civil rights activism and developing black consciousness, and led to the magazine supporting King both financially and ideologically.²⁴⁹ This feeling was apparently mutual, given King's previous collaborations with *Ebony* through features such as 'Advice for Living', and his favourable depiction of the magazine in personal correspondence.²⁵⁰

The benefits of this relationship to both parties were demonstrated through the publication of King's 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail' in August 1963.²⁵¹ Aware of his positive representation in *Ebony* and its huge circulation, King had personally sent a copy of his letter to the magazine.²⁵² *Ebony* did not disappoint, enthusiastically describing the letter as a 'modern classic' and publishing it in a way which sought to downplay criticisms of King that had overshadowed his involvement in the Albany Movement.²⁵³ During 1961 and 1962 SNCC activists Charles Sherrod, Cordell Reagon and Charles Jones

²⁴⁸ Bennett, "The Mood of the Negro," 28.

²⁴⁹ Atwater, "Editorial Policy of *Ebony* Before and After the Civil Rights Act of 1964," 88.

²⁵⁰ Carson et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Volume IV*, 527.

²⁵¹ King, "Letter From A Birmingham Jail," *Ebony*, August 1963, 23-33.

²⁵² Jonathan Rieder, *Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter From Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 157.

²⁵³ S. Jonathan Bass, *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the 'Letter From Birmingham Jail'* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 143.

orchestrated a formal coalition to challenge segregation in Albany, Georgia.²⁵⁴ However, Sherrod and his counterparts were aggrieved at the SCLC's subsequent involvement, and became critical of King's efforts to organise local protest around an ambivalent black middle class.²⁵⁵

Ebony's editing of King's 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail' demonstrated its sensitivity to his depiction as an aloof and bourgeois figure.²⁵⁶ The magazine omitted sections of the letter which could be used to attack King's privileged position and apparent dismissal of younger campaigners, including his declaration that 'seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas', alongside references to him passing work onto his secretaries.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, the publication of the letter offered a powerful affirmation of the position outlined in Bennett's 'Negro History' series. King utilised the moral weight of black history as an overarching trope which connected blacks across generational and philosophical lines, and reiterated the rightful claim of black citizens upon the nation. He argued that 'before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson scratched across the pages of history the majestic word of the Declaration of Independence, we were here.'²⁵⁸

The Emancipation Proclamation Special and the March on Washington

If readers had any lingering doubts over *Ebony's* newfound commitment to black history, then they were most likely erased by news of a major special

²⁵⁴ Joann Christian Mants, "We Turned This Upside-Down Country Right Side Up," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, ed. Faith S. Holsaert (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 128-130.

²⁵⁵ Aldon D. Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 241-246; Robert E. Lockett, Jr., "Charles Sherrod and Martin Luther King, Jr.: Mass Action and Nonviolence in Albany," in *The Human Tradition in the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Susan M. Glisson (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 181-184.

²⁵⁶ Glenn T. Eskew, *But For Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 43-45.

²⁵⁷ Bass, *Blessed Are The Peacemakers*, 238.

²⁵⁸ King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," 23.

issue marking the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation.²⁵⁹ The magazine fanned reader anticipation by suggested that the scope of the special had necessitated the installation of a new computer subscription system.²⁶⁰ At 236 pages long, it would remain the largest issue of *Ebony* published until its fortieth anniversary issue in 1985. Its editors noted that the special would look to 'assess the position of the Negro in America today, peer back into his past to see how he has reached that position and look forward somewhat into his future.'²⁶¹

Johnson took significant pains to mark the special as a 'blue-ribbon event' – most notably through procuring statements from President Kennedy and former Presidents Hoover, Truman and Eisenhower.²⁶² He would also score a coup through a photo opportunity presenting Kennedy with the special at the White House.²⁶³ Regardless of his ambivalence toward the black press during his time as president, Eisenhower was generous in his praise for the issue.²⁶⁴ He declared it 'a privilege to pay my respects to the staff of *Ebony* magazine as your publication celebrates the centennial of one of the great landmarks in the evolution of our republic.'²⁶⁵ However, Eisenhower's support for *Ebony's* 'celebration' of the Emancipation Proclamation sat awkwardly alongside Johnson's firm assertion that 'in this summer of the Negro's discontent, the unfinished business of the Emancipation Proclamation is glaringly apparent.'²⁶⁶

²⁵⁹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1963, 25.

²⁶⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, August 1963, 21.

²⁶¹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, September 1963, 18.

²⁶² Hoover did not write a personal letter of commendation, but gave permission for the magazine to adapt a quote from *The Challenge to Liberty*.

²⁶³ "Centennial Issue," *Jet*, 12 September 1963, 53.

²⁶⁴ Booker, *Shocking the Conscience*, 137-138.

²⁶⁵ "Eisenhower Statement," *Ebony*, September 1963, 21.

²⁶⁶ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, September 1963, 19.

Johnson's rhetoric accentuated *Ebony's* shift toward a more direct engagement with the question of civil rights and racial equality, and echoed the sentiments expressed by other magazine's such as *Freedomways*. Several months before the publication of *Ebony's* 'Emancipation Proclamation' special, the editors of *Freedomways* declared that emancipation was 'still deferred', and that 1963 was the year of the 'still un-free.'²⁶⁷ Relatedly, Jamaican-American historian Joel Augustus Rogers attacked the hypocrisy of the centennial celebrations, noting that despite the efforts of Congress to celebrate the centennial as a moment of national harmony, the ongoing struggle for civil rights demonstrated that 'the opposite was to be the result.'²⁶⁸

From a different perspective, the 'Emancipation Proclamation' special confirmed the centrality of both Bennett and black history to the magazine's content. Bennett contributed a number of major features, including a cover story on Frederick Douglass as 'the father of the protest movement', a capsule version of his black history series titled 'Ten Most Dramatic Events in Negro History', and another article on 'The Negro Woman.'²⁶⁹ Like Garvey, Bennett stressed Douglass' relevance to the current generation as the 'father of the protest movement' and the 'first of the "freedom riders" and "sit-inners."²⁷⁰ The editor declared that 'although he died 68 years ago, Frederick Douglass is as current as yesterday's headline.'²⁷¹

Ebony's use of Douglass on the cover of the 1963 special was rooted in his unifying role as a hero for both integrationist and nationalist historians. Eric

²⁶⁷ "Proclaimed...Promised...Still Deferred," *Freedomways*, Winter 1965, 5.

²⁶⁸ Joel Augustus Rogers, "Civil War Centennial, Myth and Reality," *Freedomways*, Winter 1963, 7.

²⁶⁹ Bennett, "Frederick Douglass," *Ebony*, September 1963, 50; "The Negro Woman," *Ebony*, September 1963, 86; "Ten Most Dramatic Moments in Negro History," *Ebony*, September 1963, 28-38.

²⁷⁰ "Cover," *Ebony*, September 1963, 5.

²⁷¹ Bennett, "Frederick Douglass," 50.

Sundquist has argued that Douglass' role as a 'hero of Negro history', allowed him to be presented as the embodiment of black progress, self-making and racial uplift.²⁷² Just as King's ability to perform the role of a unifying activist was in part predicated in his spirituality, so too did Bennett stress the importance of Douglass' own religious faith, which allowed him to take up the role of a 'universal man.' Yet Bennett also contended that 'finally – and this is most important – Douglass was militant.' This combination of perseverance, spirituality, and militancy positioned Douglass' life and philosophy as central to the varying aims of the modern civil rights movement.²⁷³

More broadly, the Emancipation Proclamation special demonstrated the extent to which *Ebony's* coverage of black history and the modern struggle for civil rights had become intimately connected. The intersectionality of historical features with articles such as 'After Desegregation, What Next?' and 'The South Looks Ahead' served to reinforce Bennett's understanding of black history as a 'living history.'²⁷⁴ Bennett challenged his readers to consider 'what does Douglass say to us today? What can we find in his life to nerve us for the trials of this hour?'²⁷⁵ This position was emphasised not only by the special's content but also the timing of its release. Scheduled to hit newsstands in the last week in August, the Emancipation Proclamation special coincided neatly with the March on Washington on the 28th of August, 1963.²⁷⁶ Similarly, in the November 1963 issue of *Ebony* which had the March on Washington as its cover story, the

²⁷² Eric J. Sundquist, "From Antislavery to Civil Rights," in *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*, ed. Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 417.

²⁷³ Bennett, "Frederick Douglass," 56.

²⁷⁴ Ralph McGill, "The South Looks Ahead," *Ebony*, September 1963, 99-102; Roy Wilkins, "After Desegregation, What Next?," *Ebony*, September 1963, 64-71.

²⁷⁵ Bennett, "Frederick Douglass," 52.

²⁷⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1963, 25.

magazine published a special 'Letters to the Editor' section which was entirely dedicated to the Emancipation Proclamation special.²⁷⁷

The distances in time and space between the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the March on Washington in 1963 were united by a profile of Charlie Smith, a black Floridian who claimed to be '121 years young.' Reportedly born in Liberia in 1842, *Ebony* contended that Smith had 'survived kidnapping, nine years of slavery, three gun-shot wounds, an earthquake, a cattle stampede, a onetime quart-a-day whiskey habit and three wives' to span the gap between 1863 and 1963.²⁷⁸ In turn, readers mediated their praise for the Emancipation Proclamation special by describing their own involvement in the March on Washington. By connecting their appreciation of black history to their active role in the ongoing struggle, 'brought to a climax in this centennial year', readers positioned themselves as an embodiment of the 'living history' imagined by Bennett.²⁷⁹

Conclusion

Ebony's landmark special issue in 1963 can be understood as the final contribution to the first phase of *Ebony's* turn toward black history during the late 1950s and early 1960s. As a process that was 'inextricably and dialectically tied' to the rise of the modern civil rights struggle, *Ebony's* expanding historical content formed an important part of the magazine's response to and engagement with civil rights activism and protest.²⁸⁰ This was a project that was facilitated by Johnson, and dominated by the writing of Bennett. However, it had also benefited from the contributions of a diverse array of actors from both inside and outside the publication.

²⁷⁷ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1963, 12-22.

²⁷⁸ "Charlie Smith, 121 Years Young," *Ebony*, November 1963, 131.

²⁷⁹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1963, 14-17.

²⁸⁰ Harding, "Power From Our People," 40.

Bennett's rise to the forefront of *Ebony's* editorial content, and his promotion of a nationalist infused vision of black history, provided an important line of defence against individuals, organisations and publications which questioned *Ebony's* commitment to the struggle for racial equality. More significantly, by bringing the writing on black history out of the academy, Bennett's series demonstrated *Ebony's* incredible potential as a tool for producing and disseminating black history to a mass audience. The 'formidable circulation machine' provided by JPC guaranteed Bennett a readership that could not be matched by any comparable writer, and which secured his emergence as one of the nation's 'best popular historians.'²⁸¹ However, this description of Bennett as a 'popular historian' also points to an underlying tension in his own role and writing. As Bennett's audience grew, so too did anxieties over the scholarly rigour and creditability of his work – anxieties that will be explored more fully in the following chapter.

²⁸¹ Molefi Kete Asante, *The African American People: A Global History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 367; Richard Guzman, *Black Writing from Chicago: in the world, not of it?* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 158.

CHAPTER 2

The Books You've Waited For: *Ebony* and the JPC Book Division

Ebony's expanding historical coverage tapped into the broader recognition by black periodicals and civil rights organisations that a revolution 'in the writing and teaching of United States history' was key to achieving the movement's objectives.²⁸² However, it is also important to explore how this shift was consolidated by other JPC projects, both in bringing black history to a mass audience, and in seeking to substantiate the importance of *Ebony's* historical content. In particular, we can see how the expansion of *Ebony's* black history content was paralleled by the development of the Johnson Book Division, and how the Book Division played a major role in substantiating *Ebony's* importance as a source for the production and dissemination of black history.

As this chapter illustrates, the question of *Ebony's* 'legitimacy' as a historical text became a heated debate among the magazine's editors, readers and detractors. This question was rooted in Bennett's acumen as a historian, which was both explicitly and implicitly critiqued within *Ebony's* pages. Whilst Bennett would later dismiss this notion, arguing that 'I have difficulty thinking in terms of Lerone Bennett legitimizing anything', other editors and media outlets believed that the mere connection of his name with the magazine 'added legitimacy' to its role as a historical document.²⁸³ More broadly, the overlap between *Ebony's* content, its role as a 'history book', and the output of the Book Division all serve to highlight the ways in which *Ebony* became caught up in broader debates about textual production and black historical representation

²⁸² Franklin, "The Negro in History Textbooks," *The Crisis*, August-September 1965, 428.

²⁸³ Charles Sanders to Lerone Bennett, 1971, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Interview with Black Books Bulletin, 1972, Box 18, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

during the early 1960s.²⁸⁴ As a result, the significance of *Ebony's* historical coverage can be connected to tensions over the role of academic and 'amateur' black historians, fears over the construction and production of black history, and anxieties over black historical representation within American popular culture and public education.

Bennett as a Historian and *Ebony* as a History Book

The diverse intellectual, philosophical and political strands which fed into the post-World War II resurgence in black history echoed the eclectic array of individuals and organisations which had contributed to the rise of the early black history movement.²⁸⁵ While the imposition of start and end dates on any 'movement' are heavily subjective, the peak of the early black history movement coincided with the Harlem Renaissance, as part of what John Hope Franklin has described as the 'second generation' of black historical scholarship.²⁸⁶

A number of writers have documented how the development of the early black history movement was underpinned by tensions between the respective role of academically trained black historians and amateur black collectors and bibliophiles.²⁸⁷ With the exception of Du Bois, who became the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard in 1895, there were no professional scholars within the 'first generation' of black historians which emerged following the publication of George Washington Williams' *History of the Negro Race in*

²⁸⁴ Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 208.

²⁸⁵ Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 1.

²⁸⁶ Franklin, "On the Evolution of Afro-American Scholarship," in *The Harvard Guide to African-American History*, ed. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Leon Litwack and Darlene Clark Hine (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), xxiv.

²⁸⁷ August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 2-6; Jeffrey C. Stewart and Fath Davis Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspectives, 1828-1984," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 312-316.

America in 1882.²⁸⁸ August Meier and Elliott Rudwick have described the majority of this generation as ‘popularizers rather than scholars.’²⁸⁹ However, following his graduation from Harvard in 1912, Woodson became the de facto leader of a group of young professional black scholars, whose writing found an outlet through the *Journal of Negro History*.²⁹⁰ Woodson stressed professional competency in helping the ‘New Negroes’ of the Harlem Renaissance to ‘express their spiritual emancipation by honoring the heroes of a previously “buried” racial past.’²⁹¹

While organisations such as the Negro Society for Historical Research also looked to recover a proud black history, they gradually became a stronghold for ‘black nationalist lay historians, many of whom would become heavily influenced by the philosophy of Marcus Garvey.’²⁹² As a result, while historians such as Woodson and Arthur Schomburg often moved in similar circles, both were conscious of the divisions between the ‘self-trained historians of the Men’s Working Club’ and professional black academics.²⁹³ In a similar vein, William Van Deburg has acknowledged the lack of attention given to Joel Augustus Rogers and other ‘outsider’ historians who, in their commitment to promoting black history, ‘often had to work outside the educational “establishment,” fund their own research, and publish their own books.’²⁹⁴

As Harding has argued, the rise of Garveyism, with its bombastic emphasis on black history and culture, has frequently been contrasted against

²⁸⁸ George Washington Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America*, reprint (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968).

²⁸⁹ Meier and Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession*, 2.

²⁹⁰ Franklin, “On the Evolution of Afro-American Historiography,” xxiv.

²⁹¹ William L. Van Deburg, *Modern Black Nationalism: from Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 64.

²⁹² Elinor des Verney Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Black Bibliophile and Collector: a Biography* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 42.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁹⁴ Van Deburg, *Modern Black Nationalism*, 64.

the more 'respectable' work of professional black historians such as Woodson. Yet while these different approaches often collided, they became the 'dual foundation' for the modern black history revival.²⁹⁵ Accordingly, this tension, which underscored the early black history movement, was also present in the post-World War II revival of black history. During the 'third generation' of black scholarship which emerged out of 'the fire and brimstone of World War II', the institutionalisation of figures such as Franklin marked a continuation of the professional legacy established by scholars such as Du Bois and Woodson.²⁹⁶ By contrast, the post-war years also witnessed the rise of a new wave of black 'social historians' whose impact would be primarily felt outside the academy. In many ways, this diverse group were embodied by the rhetoric of Malcolm X, whose reading of black history in prison played a central role in his transformation 'from a convicted criminal to a conscious critical thinker.'²⁹⁷ Following his entry into the Nation of Islam, the importance of black history became a key theme in Malcolm's speeches. He argued that the black revolution would only come to pass if blacks were empowered by knowledge of their past.

The American so-called Negro is a soldier who doesn't know his history; he's a servant who doesn't know his history; he's a graduate of Columbia, or Yale, or Harvard, or Tuskegee, who doesn't know his history. He's confined, he's limited, he's held under the control and the jurisdiction of the white man who knows more about the history of the Negro than the Negro knows about himself.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Harding, "Power From Our People," 44.

²⁹⁶ Franklin, "On the Evolution of Afro-American History," xxv; Hine, "John Hope Franklin and Black History in Transition," *Journal of African American History* 94 (2009): 357-358; "John Hope Franklin at Cambridge," *Ebony*, September 1963, 4.

²⁹⁷ Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 31.

²⁹⁸ Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches* (New York: Monthly Review, 1971), 27-28.

This group of 'social historians' included figures such as John Henrik Clarke, who would go on to become a full college professor despite lacking a high school diploma, let alone a PhD.²⁹⁹ It also came to include Bennett, who Clarke would place at the forefront of a new generation of black activists and intellectuals that was demanding a 're-evaluation of the part that the people of African descent have played in the making of America.'³⁰⁰ The question of Bennett's scholarly acumen, and the accuracy and academic legitimacy of his black history articles, played a critical role in framing his public image as a maker and shaper of black history. While Bennett received warm acclaim as a popular historian, his reception as a serious historian was not so universal.

The apparent division between the intellectual rigor of black historians such as Franklin and the work of Bennett and other purveyors of 'popular' black history has been effectively summarised through the childhood reflections of Daryl Michael Scott. Looking back on upbringing on the Chicago South Side, and his developing sense of historical awareness, Scott notes that 'in my home, we had two histories of black people. We had Lerone Bennett's *Before the Mayflower* and Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom*.'³⁰¹ At least initially, Scott was more enamoured with the work of Bennett, which let him know that 'nothing could be received as truth.' In his commitment to recovering black history so that blacks 'could understand the righteousness of their cause', Bennett was inarguably 'the man.' However, Scott equates his intellectual development and the formalisation of his role as a professional historian with a move away from

²⁹⁹ Robert Thomas, "John Henrik Clarke, Black Studies Advocate, Dies at 83," *New York Times*, 20 July 1998, 13.

³⁰⁰ Clarke, "Lerone Bennett," 481.

³⁰¹ Scott, "Following the Footsteps of John Hope Franklin," 39.

the essentialist writing of Bennett, and a fuller appreciation of Franklin's more 'serious' scholarship.³⁰²

Bennett himself appeared wary of this tension, and took pains to insulate his early historical writing from accusations of bias. This can be seen through his frequent citation of Kenneth Stampp and other scholars who called for a 'completely objective' study of the black past.³⁰³ As we shall see in the following chapter, Bennett's work came to reflect the sentiments of Black Power historians and cultural nationalists, who attacked Stampp's 'race-blind liberalism' as expressed through studies such as *The Peculiar Institution*.³⁰⁴ However, in attempting to formalise *Ebony's* engagement with black history, Bennett references a number of historians he would later denounce. Perhaps most notable among these figures was Stanley Elkins, who would become a persona non grata for many black historians in the second half of the 1960s, but who was cited uncritically by Bennett in his January 1962 article 'Behind the Cotton Curtain.'³⁰⁵

This Issue is a History Book in Itself

Through *Ebony's* internal coverage, and the response of its critics and readers, we can see how questions regarding Bennett's acumen as a historian, and by extension *Ebony's* value as a voice for black history, were implicitly and explicitly addressed. One of the most obvious ways in which this occurred was through connecting Bennett's series to the role of the book as a reliable textual

³⁰² Ibid., 40.

³⁰³ Van Deburg, *Slavery & Race in American Popular Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 88-89.

³⁰⁴ Richard Follett, Eric Foner and Walter Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: the Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011), 93; Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956), viii-ix.

³⁰⁵ Bennett, "Behind the Cotton Curtain," 82; Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 98.

form for historical representation. From the beginning of Bennett's 'Negro History' series, *Ebony* was quick to inform its readers that 'the complete series will later be published in book form', and this message would be reiterated on numerous occasions as the series progressed.³⁰⁶

This connection was expanded through the magazine's 'Letters to the Editor' section. Between the end of 1961 and the beginning of 1963 *Ebony* published an average of 3 letters per issue relating to Bennett's history series.³⁰⁷ A major trend in these letters came through the attempts of different readers to measure the value of Bennett's articles against book-length studies, and their efforts to either associate or disassociate *Ebony* from the book as a form. This trend was established in the very first letter to the editor published about Bennett's series in September 1961. New York reader Ronnie Boone contended that 'with your coming series on Negro history, you are giving me a chance to learn all that I knew was true.' In describing the magazine's revelatory coverage of black history, Boone compared *Ebony's* content to biblical scripture. He declared that, '*Ebony*, you are like the "Bible" to me', and suggested that 'like Moses, who came to lead his people to the Promised Land, you have come and you are leading.'³⁰⁸

Boone's effusive praise for Bennett's article was matched by other readers such as Herbert Brown, who called for 'an article on our history in every issue', and George Crawford, who argued that the series would 'fill a long felt need for many' who harboured a 'deep interest in Negro history.'³⁰⁹ Arcard Benson was another reader who played on this theme, although where Boone

³⁰⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1961, 22.

³⁰⁷ A total of 51 letters or partial letters focusing on Bennett's series were published across 17 issues between September 1961 and February 1963.

³⁰⁸ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, September 1961, 12.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

had equated *Ebony* with a book, Benson praised Bennett's scholarship by holding it above a book length study. In his description of the July 1961 issue as a 'milestone in journalism', Benson stressed the role of *Ebony's* black history series in helping to discredit the misguided teachings of Carleton Putnam presented through his 1961 study *Race and Reason*.³¹⁰

By contrast, a reader from Ann Arbor cast aspersions over Bennett's credentials, arguing that his article 'contains many abuses of historical fact and has all the earmarks of a propaganda leaflet.'³¹¹ This was enforced by the reader giving no name in the letter, but instead signing off with the insignia 'A Historian.' Whereas other readers had attempted to play up *Ebony's* impact by associating it with the 'good book', or offering favourable comparisons between Bennett's work and full length historical studies, the reader from Ann Arbor sought to discredit Bennett's credentials both through identifying themselves by the academic qualifier of 'A Historian' and by comparing his article to the leaflet as an explicitly 'non-book' form. To make the comparison clear, the reader suggested that readers look to George Murdock's *Africa: Its Peoples and their Culture History* for a 'closer approximation of the truth.'³¹²

This pattern in the responses of readers continued following the second article in Bennett's 'Negro History' series, with letters to the editor seeking to measure its impact against the book as the definitive form of historical production. Californian reader Constance Maxon quantified her praise of Bennett's article through asserting that 'I am, as a professional writer (foreign correspondent and novelist), able to appreciate your publication from a writer's

³¹⁰ Carleton Putnam, *Race and Reason: a Yankee View* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961).

³¹¹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, September 1961, 13.

³¹² George P. Murdock, *Africa: its Peoples and their Culture History* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959).

viewpoint as well as from a reader's viewpoint.³¹³ By praising Bennett's article, and explicitly outlining her own credentials as a writer, Maxon sought to substantiate Bennett's own claims to that position.

Similarly, Mark Elliott contended that Bennett's article had led him directly on to Frazier's *The Negro Family in the United States* and Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom*. Through linking *Ebony* as a text to the writing of Frazier and Franklin, Elliott further narrowed the gap between magazine and book content.³¹⁴ On the other hand, readers such as Irving Weston looked to create distance between Bennett's professional role as a historian and the value of his work to the 'layman' reader. Whether by accident or design, Weston played on frequent critiques of academic writing as being too complex for the average reader by asking that Bennett's use of references be signposted more clearly, so that the everyman could develop 'a better and broader understanding' of black history.³¹⁵

Bennett's series had also begun to draw praise from more official outlets, including the ASNLH. In a March 1962 issue of the *Negro History Bulletin*, the organisation expressed its approval of 'this pioneering stride by *Ebony* to bring Negro History to the masses.'³¹⁶ The *Bulletin* opened its feature with two letters from William Boone, a member of *Ebony*'s promotional department who would go on to become its assistant circulation manager.³¹⁷ Boone's letters demonstrated *Ebony*'s desire to garner praise from important black history institutions and organisations such as the ASNLH, with Boone noting that 'we will appreciate whatever comments or quotes you wish to make' in the

³¹³ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1961, 19.

³¹⁴ "Backstage," *Ebony*, April 1962, 16.

³¹⁵ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, October 1961, 18.

³¹⁶ "Contribution of *Ebony*," *Negro History Bulletin*, March 1962, 141.

³¹⁷ "Masthead," *Ebony*, March 1965, 4.

organisation's own publications. However, as the *Bulletin* acknowledged, 'even without a request by *Ebony* to do so', it would have gladly expressed its support for *Ebony's* attempt to recovery black history for a popular audience. The *Bulletin* declared that *Ebony*, through its black history series, was 'making a vital contribution to the dissemination of historical truth.'³¹⁸

Yet the *Bulletin's* coverage of Bennett's series also looked to subtly distinguish itself, and the work of the ASNLH, from the kind of popular history presented in *Ebony's* coverage. Even in its praise for the series, the *Bulletin* demonstrated a certain wariness in noting that 'the materials presented seem to be valid, interesting and worthwhile.' Similarly, the *Bulletin* centred *Ebony's* importance on its ability to 'span the gap between scholarly research and public education.'³¹⁹ From this perspective, *Ebony's* coverage of black history was seen to be most valuable as a way of drawing members back to the ASNLH through 'stimulating greater popular interest in the general area of Negro History.' This role would not affect the organisation's duty 'to sponsor authentic research and publications in its special area of activity', and also exposed the perceived limitations of *Ebony's* historical coverage.³²⁰ By contrast, readers such as Alyston Roberts made no such distinction between the work of *Ebony* and the ASNLH, and simply stated that both outlets were providing a powerful service 'in creating the atmosphere needed in this day and time to give our people and the peoples of the world a new concept of our greatness.'³²¹

Such comparisons with more reputable black history outlets, or descriptions of *Ebony* as a book, would be expanded through the publication of the magazine's 1963 Emancipation Proclamation special. This was facilitated in

³¹⁸ "Contribution of *Ebony*," 141.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid., 142.

³²¹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1962, 18.

part through an emphasis on the special's sheer size, with Johnson reminding his readers that, at over 230 pages long, the issue contained 'more words and pictures than most hard-cover books.'³²² Indeed, its girth prompted a change in printing that made it more like a book than a magazine. The 'Backstage' feature of the special described how the issue's size necessitated a change from the traditional magazine saddle-stitching to a 'side-stitched' book style – a change brought on by the literal weight of black history.³²³ Readers were warned to expect a 'hefty package weighing nearly a pound and a half' from their local postman.³²⁴

The scale of the special was matched by the responses of *Ebony's* readers.³²⁵ Like the reaction of readers to Bennett's 'Negro History' series, many of the letters which were published in the magazine compared the issue favourably to book length studies, named the special as a book, or suggested that it be converted into a more conventional book format. Readers such as Floralyn Green and Frederick Dillard contended that the special ranked 'among the greatest books ever written on or about Negro history', or simply remarked that 'this issue is a history book in itself.'³²⁶ James Dumpson, Commissioner of Welfare for New York City between 1959 and 1965, recommended that a pocket edition could be produced to be 'put in the hands of every child in every school of the country.'³²⁷ Perhaps the greatest praise came from Andrew 'Doc'

³²² Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, September 1963, 19.

³²³ "Backstage," *Ebony*, September 1963, 18.

³²⁴ "*Ebony* Emancipation Issue Largest in History," *Jet*, 29 August 1963, 21.

³²⁵ In the final three months of 1963 and the first month of 1964, *Ebony* published in excess of 50 letters from readers relating either to specific articles in the Emancipation Proclamation special, or the issue more generally.

³²⁶ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1963, 12; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1963, 20.

³²⁷ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, January 1964, 16.

Young, who trumpeted the special as 'one of the most titanic, most important 'books' ever published in America.'³²⁸

Likewise, just as the magazine's editors had highlighted a change in formatting which brought *Ebony* closer to a book in its production, so too did readers engage with this theme. Starnes Lewis noted that upon reading the special he immediately decided to have the issue bound like a book to preserve it, and that he had advised all his friends 'to bind their copies also and save [them] for future reference.'³²⁹ This desire to preserve the special in a more enduring form was expressed by numerous readers, who contended that they would save it for future generations as an 'invaluable reference source.'³³⁰ Through such descriptions, both the magazine's editors and readers move its image away from the impermanence of the periodical as a disposable textual form, and toward the durability of the book as a substantial textual artefact.

The Production and Instruction of Post-War Black History

From a different perspective, the ways in which *Ebony* was connected to the book form, or explicitly described as a history book, were intimately linked to its perceived value as a tool for educational empowerment. Its editors speculated that when Bennett's series appeared as a book 'it could well become a Negro history text that will be found on the library shelves of all elementary and high school libraries in the country.'³³¹ Following the enthusiastic early response of readers, the magazine declared that Bennett was being 'swamped' by praise, and was quick to stress that 'much of it comes from college and high school teachers.'³³² Such responses from the magazine's

³²⁸ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1963, 14.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

³³⁰ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1963, 22

³³¹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, July 1961, 22.

³³² "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1961, 21.

readers looked to substantiate its role as a valuable source of black history, but also revealed a deep dissatisfaction with the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of black culture and history. We can connect such sentiments to broader anxieties and fears regarding the production and instruction of black history in the post-war years.

If the third generation of black historiographical scholarship which emerged in the wake of World War II marked a continuation of tensions between 'academic' and 'non-academic' black historians, it was also characterised by a new trend. As Franklin has acknowledged, the increasing number of white scholars working in the field of African American history became a 'salient feature' during the 1940s and 1950s, and was the result of a variety of converging factors.³³³ The respective backgrounds of scholars such as Herbert Aptheker, Philip Foner and August Meier can be seen to have encouraged them to 'take a personal interest in black history.'³³⁴ Like other young white researchers such as Elliott Rudwick and C. Vann Woodward, many of these historians were deeply impacted by the liberalism of the New Deal, which helped to foster their increased engagement with 'the negro problem.'³³⁵ Another cohort of white scholars including Louis Harlan were influenced by their wartime interactions with black servicemen, which catalysed an interest in black history and culture.³³⁶

The growing numbers of white historians writing black history during 1940s and 1950s was mirrored by the influence of white liberal social scientists,

³³³ Franklin, "On the Evolution of Afro-American Historiography," xxvi.

³³⁴ Kevern Verney, *The Debate on Black Civil Rights in America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 4-5.

³³⁵ Elliott M. Rudwick, "Du Bois versus Garvey: Race Propagandists at War," *Journal of Negro Education* 28 (1959): 421-431.

³³⁶ Louis R. Harlan, Raymond Smock, *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis R. Harlan* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988).

who turned their gaze to the subject of African American life and focused on notions of 'cultural inferiority or pathology' to generate support for racial equality.³³⁷ By contrast, Langston Hughes complained that in the decade between the end of World War II and the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, black Americans had 'lost their passion' for the study of history.³³⁸ Kenneth Robert Janken has demonstrated how this shift in scholarly interest manifested itself in the literature, with the *Journal of Negro History* becoming dominated by the work of white scholars for a period during the early 1950s.³³⁹

By the *Brown* decision in 1954, two distinctly different strands of African American historiography can be argued to have emerged: 'a scholarly history that was increasingly integrated into the white academic establishment, and a public history that remained a racially autonomous movement in a predominantly segregated black urban community.'³⁴⁰ For some activists, the entry of prominent black historians into the white academy was seen to have come at the expense of black public history. In 1962 Malcolm X warned that 'seldom can you find one among us who is an expert on the history of the black man. And because of his lack of knowledge concerning the history of the black man, no matter how much he excels in other sciences, he's always confined, he's always neglected to the same low rung of the ladder.'³⁴¹

This was compounded by the continuing segregation of the American educational and publishing system. Whatever the political or intellectual intentions of 'third generation' historians writing about African American history,

³³⁷ Herbert Aptheker, *Documentary History of the Negro People* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951); Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 178-181.

³³⁸ Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America?: Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 110.

³³⁹ Kenneth Robert Janken, *Rayford W. Logan and the Dilemma of the African American Intellectual* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 216-217.

³⁴⁰ Stewart and Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness," 324.

³⁴¹ X, *The End of White World Supremacy*, 26.

the publication of their work was often channelled by and through systemically discriminatory publishing houses into segregated schools and public library systems. When readers of *Ebony* described the magazine as a book, or endorsed its use in an educational setting such as a classroom, they drew attention to the multiple ways in which black scholars and writers had been shut out of the American book publishing industry, and how the broader black public had been denied access to books themselves. This fate was not reserved for the black proletariat, as Du Bois discovered in 1950 following his attempts to access the Carnegie library. In a letter to Virginia Lacy Jones, Du Bois bemoaned the irony that 'although my own books were in the library, I could not take them out.'³⁴²

However, as the black freedom struggle coalesced during the late 1950s and early 1960s, independent black publishing houses came to play an important role in challenging hegemonic understandings of black history produced through white editorial and publishing channels. While there were only a handful of commercial black book publishing firms active prior to 1960, a flurry of black presses were created during the 1960s 'to meet the demand for new books about blacks that resulted from the black revolution.'³⁴³ Ann Allen Shockley has contended that this increase in black publishers played a major role in expanding the number of books 'by and about blacks in the publishing market', and helped to counteract the reluctance of white publishers to publish unknown but aspiring black writers.³⁴⁴ At the head of this new wave of black

³⁴² Du Bois, "Non-Public Library," in *The World of W. E. B. Du Bois: a Quotation Sourcebook*, ed. Meyer Weinberg (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), 140.

³⁴³ Donald F. Joyce, *Black Book Publishers in the United States: a Historical Dictionary of the Presses, 1817-1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), xiv.

³⁴⁴ Ann Allen Shockley, "A Necessary Union: Black Publishers and Librarians," *Black World*, March 1975, 38-39.

book publishers was the Johnson Publishing Book Division, which published its first title in 1962.

Black History, Educational Inequality, and the Birth of the Book Division

Johnson would later argue that the Book Division marked one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by JPC.³⁴⁵ Under the direction of company librarian Doris Saunders, who would go on to be a professor of print journalism at Jackson State University, the Book Division published a diverse range of titles.³⁴⁶ This included expansive multi-volume series such as the *Ebony Pictorial History of Black America*, a mammoth three-volume work which encompassed nearly one thousand pages, and was argued to be 'the most complete and authentic popular history of African Americans ever produced.' In advertising the series, *Ebony* described the project as 'one of the crowning achievements in the 25-year mission of *Ebony* Magazine to build and project the image of the black man.'³⁴⁷ The Book Division would also publish a range of original texts, and reissued books by pioneering black activists such as Frederick Douglass and Samuel Ringgold Ward as part of the *Ebony* 'Classics Series.'³⁴⁸

Through providing a model for a successful commercial black book enterprise, the Johnson Book Division helped to prepare the ground for subsequent black publishing houses such as Dudley Randall's Broadside Press and the Third World Press.³⁴⁹ Donald Joyce has argued that the JPC Book Division was not only among the first black book enterprises to emerge during the 1960s, but would also go on to become one of the most influential,

³⁴⁵ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 287.

³⁴⁶ PhD Thesis, Box 11, Doris E. Saunders Papers.

³⁴⁷ "Pictorial History of Black America," *Ebony*, November 1971, 45.

³⁴⁸ "*Ebony* Book Shelf," *Ebony*, November 1992, 12.

³⁴⁹ Carole Parks, "An Annotated Directory: the Black Publishers," *Black World*, March 1975, 74.

producing a diverse range of titles 'on many aspects of black history and culture.'³⁵⁰ Just as Randall would later assert that new black publishers were 'not interested in making money, but in publishing what needed to be published', so too did *Ebony's* editors stress that the JPC Book Division was not motivated by financial gain. Saunders argued that without the financial clout provided by Johnson's publications, the Book Division 'might have gone out of business in its first year.'³⁵¹ Johnson rationalised the project as an extension of his commitment to recovering black history, by promoting the Book Division as a project which specialised 'in books by and about Negroes.'³⁵² Yet critics have largely overlooked its influence to focus on the impact of more 'radical' presses which emerged during the second half of the 1960s.³⁵³

On an immediate level, this neglect has meant that the ambitious scope and significant production of the Book Division has remained underappreciated. More significantly, it has meant that the reciprocal relationship between *Ebony's* historical content and the development of the Book Division has been obscured. The Book Division became a key part of attempts to cement *Ebony's* relevancy to the black freedom struggle and its role as a major outlet for black history. The publication of early works such as *Before the Mayflower* and *Burn, Killer, Burn!* were intended to 'meet the demand for materials on black history' coming from its readers, to form a further riposte to criticisms of JPC by more militant activists, and to contract the gaps between the periodical and book as textual forms.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ Joyce, *Black Book Publishers in the United States*, 135-136.

³⁵¹ Shockley, "A Necessary Union," 40.

³⁵² "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1962, 22; Dudley Randall, "Black Publisher, Black Writer: an Answer," *Black World*, March 1975, 35.

³⁵³ Melba J. Boyd, *Wrestling With the Muse: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Julius E. Thompson, *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black Arts Movement in Detroit, 1960-1995* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1999).

³⁵⁴ Thompson, *Dudley Randall*, 143.

The formation of the Book Division may also have been influenced by localised debates into the relationship between black history, civil rights and educational inequality in Chicago. A key battleground for civil rights protest in Chicago during the late 1950s and early 1960s was the city's public school system, with a grassroots movement emerging in protest to the policies and personal prejudices of Schools Superintendent Benjamin Willis.³⁵⁵ The continued influx of black migrants into Chicago, and their containment within segregated black enclaves, generated an enrolment crisis which 'trapped black children in crowded schools and allowed whites to escape.'³⁵⁶ By the early 1960s class sizes in black schools were twenty-five percent larger than in white schools, and per-pupil expenditure was significantly lower.³⁵⁷ In 1962 the Coordinating Council for Community Organizations was formed; a broad coalition of different civil rights groups which mobilised support for school reform and began to organise sit-ins, mass marches and school walk-outs.³⁵⁸

Criticisms of a lack of black historical representation became just one aspect of increasing resistance to racial inequality within the city's public school system. Praise for Bennett's black history series frequently connected its value to a lack of historical representation within American schools and colleges on a local and national scale. Readers such as Vera Grayer expressed their appreciation of the series, given that 'many of our northern-born Negro youth

³⁵⁵ Joseph Watras, *Politics, Race, and Schools: Racial Integration, 1954-1994* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 13-16; Arvarh E. Strickland, *History of the Chicago Urban League* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 233-241.

³⁵⁶ Amanda I. Seligman, *Block By Block: Neighborhood and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 131.

³⁵⁷ John L. Rury, "Race, Space, and the Politics of Chicago's Public Schools: Benjamin Willis and the Tragedy of Urban Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 39 (1999): 117-142; Allen J. Matusow, *The Unravelling of America: a History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 200-201.

³⁵⁸ Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, *Confronting the Color Line: the Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 90-91; Rury, "Race, Space and the Politics of Chicago's Public Schools," 132.

have not and are not being taught Negro history' in a positive way.³⁵⁹ Relatedly, a bevy of teachers and students replied to the series expressing their delight that Bennett was producing material which would 'throw light on the American Negro and his heritage' that was sorely needed in high schools and colleges.³⁶⁰ A number of teachers informed *Ebony* that they were incorporating Bennett's articles into their classroom teaching and discussion.³⁶¹

In the lead-up to the launch of the Book Division, and in parallel with Bennett's 'Negro History' series, *Ebony* published a series of articles criticising Willis' influence and bemoaning the state of Chicago's public school system for black students. Bennett highlighted Willis' opposition to school transfers, and highlighted his attempts to block transfers through lying about surplus classrooms, and opening temporary black schools in condemned buildings.³⁶² In turn, Alex Poinsett attacked Willis' policies and argued that 'school boards have gerrymandered school districts to restrict Negroes, have selected school sites in such a way that school enrolment is either all-Negro or all-White and have manipulated transfer policies so that Negro children could not switch out of their local schools.'³⁶³ Such articles, when placed alongside Bennett's black history series, and its reception by readers, helped to situate *Ebony's* production of black history as part of broader efforts to combat racial inequality within Chicago's schools. *Ebony's* announcement of the Book Division's formation stressed its relevance to both students and teachers, and noted that its books could be 'used with confidence in any classroom or lecture forum.'³⁶⁴

³⁵⁹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1961, 18.

³⁶⁰ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1961, 19-20.

³⁶¹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, February 1962, 15.

³⁶² Bennett, "North's Hottest Fight For Integration," 35.

³⁶³ Alex Poinsett, "School Segregation Up North," *Ebony*, June 1962, 89,

³⁶⁴ "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1962, 22.

Burn, Killer, Burn!, and Black History as Life and Death

Robert Johnson, the managing editor of *Jet* magazine, would later position the birth of the Book Division as a direct response to the reluctance of mainstream publishers to accept texts written by black authors. Johnson contended that his publisher and namesake had originally approached a number of white presses to accept Bennett's script for *Before the Mayflower*, but that he was met with restrictive demands for financial guarantees and shared publication costs. As a result, Johnson decided that 'if he was going to have to invest a large sum of his own money to get a mainstream publisher to print Bennett's work, he would be better served by publishing the tome himself.'³⁶⁵ Doris Saunders, the first director of the Book Division, also stressed the catalysing role of Bennett's 'Negro History' series.

We received so many requests for it that we finally had it reprinted and sent it to anyone who asked for it. So it ultimately seemed to us that the best thing to do was to put these things together in a book or booklet. And the more we talked the more we realized that to publish a booklet would be as expensive as to publish a book, if we did it the way we wanted to do it.³⁶⁶

Like John Johnson's account of the Book Division's inception expressed in his memoirs, both Robert Johnson and Saunders equate *Before the Mayflower* with the birth of the Book Division. However, Bennett's text was not the first book published by the Book Division. Instead, this honour fell to a roman à clef titled *Burn, Killer, Burn!* written by Paul Crump, a death row inmate at Cook County Jail who had been imprisoned for the murder of a Chicago security guard. Crump's novel focused on the semi-biographical figure of Guy Morgan, Jr., a frustrated young black man from the Chicago ghetto who

³⁶⁵ Brown, "Souled Out," 82-83.

³⁶⁶ Joyce, *Black Book Publishers in the United States*, 135.

commits a murder, and ultimately commits suicide in prison rather than face execution.³⁶⁷ While Crump's book has been largely written out of the Book Division's formation, it deserves further attention for a number of reasons. Firstly, just as Bennett's black history series helped to link elements of *Ebony's* content to the more militant philosophy of the little black magazines, so too could *Burn, Killer, Burn!* be read as a rebuke to criticisms of JPC. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the message of *Burn, Killer, Burn!* complemented Bennett's understanding of black history as a living history.

In contrast to *Ebony's* repeated reminders that Bennett's 'Negro History' series would be published as a full length book, there was almost no mention of Crump's book being released through the Book Division in the months leading up to its publication. For example, in a profile of Crump by Louis Robinson published in July 1962, the author had noted Crump's 'soon to be published novel *Burn, Killer, Burn!*', but had made no reference to it being produced by JPC in the main body of the article.³⁶⁸ However, Robinson's article, alongside another article on Crump published by Ronald Bailey in *Life* magazine a few weeks later, helped to draw popular attention to the inmate's cause.³⁶⁹ The *Afro-American* cited *Ebony's* strong support for Crump's case as a major factor in the 'concerted campaign' to save his life, and the national spotlight on Crump led to a change of tact.³⁷⁰ By the point of the book's release, *Ebony* was contending that the book had 'aroused national interest in addition to being sought for publications in eight foreign countries.'³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ Paul Crump, *Burn, Killer, Burn!* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1962).

³⁶⁸ Louie Robinson, "15 Dates with the Chair," *Ebony*, July 1962, 31.

³⁶⁹ Ronald Bailey, "Facing Death, a New Life Perhaps Too Late," *Life*, 27 July 1962, 28.

³⁷⁰ "Thousands in Fight to Save Paul Crump," *Afro-American*, 28 July 1962, 19.

³⁷¹ "How a Prisoner became Writer," *Ebony*, November 1962, 94.

Much of the attention given to both Crump and his protagonist Morgan positioned them as tropes for the disenfranchised black male. *Ebony* described the text as a four hundred page epic which told of the 'frustrations, fears and loneliness experienced by Guy Morgan, Jr. as he gropes his way to manhood in a Chicago slum.'³⁷² The cover sleeve for the first edition of *Burn, Killer, Burn!* also emphasised this theme, positioning Crump as 'perhaps the world's unlikeliest author' and detailing his impoverished childhood and exposure to crime and social hardship.³⁷³ Similarly, Norman Hunter's jacket design depicted Morgan as a potent symbol for black urban inequality, emphasising that 'the streets Guy Morgan lives in are Chicago streets – but you'll find the same kind of streets in Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles or any one of the big cities in the United States where nobody cares until it's too late.'

The decision to make *Burn, Killer, Burn!* the first book published by the fledgling Book Division could be seen as a daring one, and certainly reinforced Johnson's efforts to position JPC as a more socially responsible organisation. The publisher could hardly have chosen a better subject to ingratiate *Ebony* and the Book Division to black militants and the developing 'little black magazines' than the tale of an angry and disenfranchised black man who ultimately commits suicide rather than be executed within a corrupt white prison system. Advertisements for Crump's text featured an artistic rendering of an athletically built Guy Morgan, Jr. with a dead-eyed stare and hands on hips, alongside his description as a 'child of the city streets...furious at his inability to cope with his world, he swings out, striking and hurting everything he touches.'³⁷⁴ *Ebony* quoted James Baldwin's contention that Crump was 'a real writer' and 'one of

³⁷² "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1962, 22.

³⁷³ Crump, *Burn, Killer, Burn!*, cover sleeve.

³⁷⁴ "This is Guy Morgan Jr.," *Ebony*, November 1962, 94.

the few people alive...for whom I have what can only be called an uncompromising respect.³⁷⁵ *Negro Digest* compared Crump's writing to figures such as Nelson Algren, Willard Motley and 'the young Richard Wright.'³⁷⁶

The book also garnered an ally in the form of Billy Freidkin, whose experimental documentary film *The People versus Paul Crump* accompanied the release of *Burn, Killer, Burn!*, and helped Crump to gain international notoriety. As part of his documentary, Freidkin restaged Crump's alleged crime scene, interposing interview footage of Crump shot at Cook County Jail with staged footage that depicted the attempted burglary and its aftermath.³⁷⁷ The documentary would go on to win the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival, but was not aired on network television due to its controversial content.³⁷⁸ Originally scheduled to be broadcast on WBKB the night before Crump's scheduled execution, scenes depicting Crump's alleged torture under police custody prompted the network to pull the film.³⁷⁹ Freidkin's documentary, and his decision to recreate the history of the case in a way which centralised Crump's perspective, complemented the efforts of *Ebony* to position the book's release as part of a revisionist history of Crump's experience.

If we return to Bennett's notion of a 'living history' and his attempts to connect black history to the lived experience of African Americans in the 1960s, we can also see how the publication of *Burn, Killer, Burn!*, alongside the magazine's coverage of Crump, provided an important foil to Bennett's black

³⁷⁵ "Burn, Killer, Burn!," *Ebony*, February 1963, 68.

³⁷⁶ "Perspectives," *Negro Digest*, October 1962, 50.

³⁷⁷ *The People versus Paul Crump*, directed by William Friedkin (Chicago: Facets Video, 2014), DVD; "William Freidkin introduces The People vs. Paul Crump," YouTube Video, 12:56, posted by "CPHPIXfestival," 4 April 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8vLDTP4EbU>.

³⁷⁸ Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock-'n'-Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 201-202; "Paul Crump Documentary Wins Top Festival Award," *Jet*, 29 November 1962, 57.

³⁷⁹ David Weiner, "The Forgotten Case of Paul Crump," *Chicago Tribune*, 20 June 2010, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-06-20/opinion/ct-oped-0620-crump-20100620_1_paul-crump-torture-jon-burge.

history series. This was most obvious through the paralleling publication of the final instalment of Bennett's 'Negro History' series and a feature on Crump in the November 1962 issue of *Ebony*. As the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation approached, Bennett contended that only by looking to the past that African Americans could move forward.³⁸⁰ Similarly, through a rehabilitative profile of Crump's life, *Ebony* stressed that a critical element which separated the respective fates of Crump and Morgan was the former's understanding of his own past. In answering the question 'how does a book like *Burn, Killer, Burn!* come to be written?', Crump pointed to the importance of history as a key touchstone in his own search for meaning, particularly when set against an uncertain future.

When a man has lived as long and as intimately as I have with the Midnight Bride (Death)...he turns, almost hungrily, to the long-buried memories of the past, digging frantically into the cold ashes of the things that used to be, sifting their precious powder lovingly through his fingers, caressing new life into the past and squeezing it into the present.³⁸¹

For Crump, the 'precious powder' of his own history was a key source of strength, both in understanding his story as part of a longer history of social injustice, and in providing him with direction, purpose, and ultimately a route toward rehabilitation. The article contended that as Crump 'looked back into the past, a pattern emerged...if he could reveal in his novel the message of his life, then maybe some other mother's son might be spared the "gruelling terror of a night on death row."' ³⁸² Crump's own knowledge of history, and his search for education about his past, offered a stark contrast to the world of Guy Morgan, Jr. Crump described his protagonist as 'a child of action and not thought', an

³⁸⁰ Bennett, "From Booker T. to Martin L.," 162.

³⁸¹ "How a Prisoner Became a Writer," 89.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 89-90.

experience that was symptomatic of many other black American youths, whose 'spiritual, social, educational and emotional needs are not met, or even recognized.'³⁸³

From this perspective, Bennett's black history series became not just an educational but an instructional collection, which, as the respective fates of Crump and Morgan demonstrated, could literally mean the difference between life and death. This was a message Bennett would reiterate through personal interviews, where he contended that black history 'was a question of survival.'³⁸⁴ Bennett would go as far as to declare that 'black history studies saved my life. It's made it possible for me to have some sense of why black people are where they are; why black people are what they are.'³⁸⁵ This was a particularly salient point for incarcerated black men, with black history providing a way of mobilising international communication and collective action among black prisoners.³⁸⁶ William Van Deburg has contended that Bennett's writing became a key outlet for black prisoners during the 1960s, with copies of *Before the Mayflower* exchanging hands 'for the princely sum of ten cartons of cigarettes.'³⁸⁷ As collections such as *Welcome to Hell*, letters to the editor and correspondence from Bennett's archival papers demonstrate, incarcerated black men frequently reached out to Bennett and *Ebony* in developing black history reading groups, and for advice on writing their own historical studies.³⁸⁸

³⁸³ Ibid., 90.

³⁸⁴ Ken Ringle, "Against the Drift of History," *Washington Post*, 27 August 1993, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

³⁸⁵ Felicia Lee, "Black History as a Lifework," *New York Times*, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

³⁸⁶ Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 173-175.

³⁸⁷ Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: the Black Power Movement and American culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 111.

³⁸⁸ Berger, *Captive Nation*, 173; George Allen to Lerone Bennett, 18 February 1971, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers; Howard Gibbs to Lerone Bennett, 3 January 1971, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers; Imari Abubakari Obadele to Lerone Bennett, 7 January 1972, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, March 1966, 14; Ocongwa Osuwo Omutu, "In

However, while the subject matter addressed in Crump's text may have appealed more militant black activists, from a business perspective the decision to publish *Burn, Killer, Burn!* was hardly radical. Johnson was well aware of the commercial appeal attached to books with controversial titles through sales feedback from the Company's mail order book lists. When we look at the books publicised in *Ebony* and other Johnson publications which were most sought after by readers, it appears that the more controversial or 'militant' the text appeared to be, the more in demand it was. Readers were drawn to eye catching texts such as *The Goddam White Man* by David Lytton and *The Black Muslims in America* by C. Eric Lincoln, which were the two best-selling books from the company's mail order requests as of November 1962.³⁸⁹ The topicality of Crump's text and media attention on his case meant that it quickly became the bestselling book available through the Company's bookshop.³⁹⁰

Furthermore, while the title of Crump's text placed it alongside other strongly titled books such as *Goddam White Man* and Ronald Fair's *Hog Butcher*, *Ebony's* coverage of Crump focused on his rehabilitation and racial uplift.³⁹¹ In contrast to the fate of his protagonist Morgan, the magazine celebrated Crump's ability to radically reform himself and achieve a respectability as a rehabilitated criminal. Such sentiments echoed the words of Otto Kerner, who upon commuting Crump's death sentence contended that 'the embittered, distorted man who committed a vicious murder no longer exists.'³⁹²

the Belly of the Beast," in *Welcome to Hell: Letters & Writings from Death Row*, ed. Jan Arriens (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005), 254.

³⁸⁹ "Negro Digest Bestsellers," *Negro Digest*, November 1962, 98.

³⁹⁰ "Books," *Jet*, 27 December 1962, 49.

³⁹¹ Ronald M. Radano, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 93.

³⁹² Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law: Volume 3* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 85.

This portrayal of Crump served to place him within a larger body of post-war rehabilitative prison fiction alongside writers such as Caryl Chessman and Nathan Leopold.³⁹³ Accordingly, the book fulfilled a dual purpose for *Ebony's* editors – its publication appeared to establish a connection with the frustrations of an increasingly disenfranchised black youth, while the magazine's own focus on Crump served to reiterate its emphasis on self-help, racial uplift and personal betterment.

Before the Mayflower

Around a month after the release of *Burn, Killer, Burn!*, Bennett's long awaited study was finally published under the title of *Before the Mayflower: a History of the Negro in America From 1619-1962*. *Ebony* positioned the study on the intersections of black academic and popular history, contending that 'it is written in a popular style but is based on sound scholarship and documentation.'³⁹⁴ This point was reiterated by Bennett in his preface to the first edition, where he explained that the text was 'not, strictly speaking, a book for scholars; but it is as scholarly as fourteen months of research could make it.'³⁹⁵ However, Bennett did include features intended to position *Before the Mayflower* as an authoritative and objective historical account. This included an extensive appendix with a detailed historical timeline of black landmarks and milestones, and a comprehensive bibliography.

Buoyed by advance sales, Bennett's text soared to the top of *Ebony's* bestseller list.³⁹⁶ The book's release was presented as the culmination of a grand project begun by Bennett's first black history series, and JPC suggested

³⁹³ Theodore Hamm, *Rebel and a Cause: Caryl Chessman and the Politics of the Death Penalty in Postwar California, 1948-1974* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 84-89.

³⁹⁴ "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1962, 22.

³⁹⁵ Bennett, *Before the Mayflower*, preface to first edition.

³⁹⁶ "Books," *Jet*, 3 January 1963, 48.

that the text deserved a place 'on every Negro family's bookshelf.'³⁹⁷ *Before the Mayflower* was released as part of the Book Division's first major wave of publications alongside texts such as Ed Clayton's study *The Negro Politician*.³⁹⁸ The work of Bennett and Crump was advertised together, under the heading 'At last! The books you've waited for.'³⁹⁹ *Ebony's* editors noted that each of these texts had been written with 'authority and documentation so that they can be used with confidence in any classroom or lecture forum.'⁴⁰⁰ More broadly, the magazine declared that they cemented JPC's pioneering role as 'the country's first major Negro-owned firm to enter the hard-cover book publishing field.'⁴⁰¹

Johnson clearly saw Bennett's book as his best chance for securing a firm footing in the book publishing industry, and marketing efforts for *Before the Mayflower* far exceeded those for *Burn, Killer, Burn!*, and other early texts published by the Book Division.⁴⁰² Excerpts from the text were reproduced in Johnson's other periodicals, and it was lauded as 'one of the most significant books on Negro history of this century.'⁴⁰³ Bennett himself was launched on an 'extensive lecture-personal appearance tour' to garner more public interest.⁴⁰⁴ At points, these efforts bordered on the absurd. For example, the 1963 *Jet* pin-up calendar was themed around the 'landmarks and milestones' celebrated in Bennett's text.⁴⁰⁵ The result was a collection of surreal images featuring scantily clad female models commemorating important moments in black history. This

³⁹⁷ "Perspectives," *Negro Digest*, November 1962, 98.

³⁹⁸ Ed Clayton, *The Negro Politician: his Successes and Failures* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1964); "Negro Progress in 1962," *Ebony*, January 1963, 88.

³⁹⁹ "At Last," *Ebony*, July 1963, 13.

⁴⁰⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1962, 22.

⁴⁰¹ "Negro Progress 1962," *Ebony*, January 1963, 88.

⁴⁰² "JET offers cash prize," *Jet*, 17 January 1963, 65; "Mayflower Author at White House," *Jet*, 21 February 1963, 5; "Men of Culture," *Jet*, 16 May 1963, 47; "Words of the Week," *Jet*, 25 April 1963, 30.

⁴⁰³ "Before the Mayflower," *Negro Digest*, March 1963, 83; "Select Books of 1962," *Negro Digest*, May 1963, 53.

⁴⁰⁴ "Noted in Passing," *Negro Digest*, June 1963, 50.

⁴⁰⁵ "Jet's 1963 Calendar Pin-Ups," *Jet*, 10 January 1963, 28.

included Marva Revis, whose swimwear was accessorised with a scroll and mortarboard in deference to the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision of 1954, and Cecilia Cooper, also in swimwear, who brandished a sign to the North Pole in tribute to perennial *Ebony* favourite Matthew Alexander Henderson.⁴⁰⁶

Alongside a diverse advertising campaign across its various magazines, JPC produced a series of pamphlets to publicise the text. Featuring a mosaic of different newspaper reviews and clippings from the national press reviewing Bennett's text, these pamphlets contended that *Before the Mayflower* had been universally acclaimed by leading scholars across the nation, and printed complimentary extracts from a number of reviews. This included a quote from *Nashville Tennessean* writer W. A. Reed, who noted that the text was 'destined to become a valuable addition to the libraries of discerning Americans', and Reese Longhorn of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, who contended that *Before the Mayflower* was certain to 'adorn the bookshelves of appreciative readers, black and white, for a long time.'⁴⁰⁷

A central theme in the book's advertising was its value as a truly representative account of black history. It was presented as a way for readers to 'know Negro History as it *really* happened', and as a text which provided a vital link to 'span the gap between scholarly research and public education.'⁴⁰⁸ Similarly, in covering *Before the Mayflower* as his 'Book of the Week' in *Jet* magazine, Robert Johnson declared it to be 'THE book with THE most revealing insights into the Negro's persecuted past', and ended by professing the text to

⁴⁰⁶ As we shall see in chapter four, the relationship between historical achievement and popular understandings of black beauty and femininity would become more contested as the 1960s progressed.

⁴⁰⁷ Before the Mayflower Advertising Pamphlet, Box 7, Hoyt Fuller Papers.

⁴⁰⁸ "Before the Mayflower," *Negro Digest*, March 1963, 45; "Before the Mayflower," *Ebony*, January 1963, 80.

be a book 'Negroes MUST read and White America dare not ignore.'⁴⁰⁹ Over and over again, the text was advertised as an important recovery of black history that informed readers in simple and unmistakeable terms; 'this is how it was.'⁴¹⁰ This emphasis on the book's educational value and significance was taken up by reviewers, with the *Chicago Daily News* calling for Bennett's work to be 'enshrined in the libraries of schools throughout the world.'⁴¹¹ Echoing these sentiments, Marion Jackson of the *Atlanta Daily World* described the text as an 'authoritative work which will win a special niche in the historical archives for its excellence.'⁴¹²

Just as the question of whether Bennett could be considered a 'legitimate' historian had underpinned many of the reader responses to his 'Negro History' series, so too was this concern addressed by reviewers of *Before the Mayflower*. Archie Jones of the *Chicago Sun-Times* reviewed Bennett's text alongside John Hope Franklin's *The Emancipation Proclamation*, arguing that both texts were an attempt to commemorate the impending centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. However, he appeared keen to distinguish the authors by their relative roles and writing styles. Franklin, as a 'ranking historian', was commended for providing a dispassionate and objective account. By contrast, Bennett as a 'very successful Negro journalist, is trying to create a heroic tradition for the American Negro.'⁴¹³ For Jones, Bennett's account was rooted in his training as a journalist rather than as a historian, and therefore favoured an emphasis on story over fact. He described Bennett's retelling of slavery as an 'exaggeration by implication' which was 'typical of

⁴⁰⁹ Robert Johnson, "Book of the Week," *Jet*, 7 February 1963, 50.

⁴¹⁰ "Before the Mayflower," *Ebony*, February 1963, 81.

⁴¹¹ "A Fine New Treatment," *Chicago Daily News*, 20 February, 1963, 33.

⁴¹² Marion Jackson, "Before the Mayflower," *Atlanta Daily World*, 23 March 1963, 6.

⁴¹³ Archie Jones, "Jefferson said 'all men'," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 27 January, 1963, 2.

heroic history.’ Jones advised readers that Franklin’s study, as the more reasonable and historically reliable text, could ‘serve as an antidote for Bennett’s emotion laden work.’⁴¹⁴

One week later, a review of *Before the Mayflower* published by Henrietta Buckmaster in the *Chicago Tribune* offered a rebuttal to many of the criticisms put forward in Jones’ review. In particular, Buckmaster can be seen to have rejected the image of Bennett as an emotional and potentially unreliable narrator. She applauded *Before the Mayflower* as a ‘moving record of human passion, put down coolly’ and described the text as an impartial ‘balance sheet – a long balance sheet begun 1,000 years ago.’ Furthermore, she emphasised its significance in highlighting the deficiencies of existing American history textbooks. Buckmaster asked her readers to consider how many of them had ‘read thru [sic] the chinks in their history books and discovered the slave revolts that, year after year, kept the South in turmoil.’⁴¹⁵ Like reader Constance Maxon before her, Buckmaster’s support of Bennett was also qualified by her own literary credentials, with the reviewer being recognised as the author of *Let My People Go: the Story of the Underground Railroad and the Growth of the Abolition Movement*.⁴¹⁶

In turn, the publication of *Before the Mayflower* cemented a shift in *Ebony*’s depiction of Bennett from being seen simply as a journalist, to a recognition of his role as a historian. This transition can be most clearly traced through Bennett’s representation in *Ebony*’s ‘Backstage’ feature, with the March

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁴¹⁵ Henrietta Buckmaster, “Moving Record of Human Passion, Coolly Put Down,” *Chicago Tribune*, 3 February 1963, D6.

⁴¹⁶ Buckmaster, *Let My People Go: the Story of the Underground Railroad and the Growth of the Abolition Movement* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959).

1963 edition being dedicated to the editor's newfound 'hero' status.⁴¹⁷ Below an image of Bennett sporting his trademark pipe, the feature described the furore which had greeted the release of *Before the Mayflower* in the JPC offices, where scores of employees had 'stood in line before Bennett's office, books in hand, to get his autograph.' The piece also offered details regarding Bennett's character and individual interests which were usually reserved for profiles of notable black celebrities. This included his careful table manner, his proclivity for pipe smoking, and his quiet home life alongside his wife and four young children at a 'small home in Princeton Park.'⁴¹⁸

Before the Mayflower would go on to receive widespread acclaim during the first two years of its release. It was considered for the prestigious Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, and would be added to a list of prominent literary works sent to international leaders by the American Booksellers Association.⁴¹⁹ Arnold Shapiro sought to make the book into a documentary for network television.⁴²⁰ Over the years and decades following its initial release, *Before the Mayflower* remained one of the Book Division's bestselling titles, and became a common site on American school and library reading lists.⁴²¹ Yet perhaps the most important short-term impact of *Before the Mayflower* came through the ways in which it substantiated *Ebony's* role as an educational tool, and extended the magazine's role in teaching black Americans 'the story of their own heritage.'⁴²² By the mid-1960s, *Ebony* would contend that through its black history articles,

⁴¹⁷ "Backstage," *Ebony*, March 1963, 23.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴¹⁹ "Books Being Sent Abroad," *New York Times*, 30 September 1963, 25; "Ebony Editor's Book for Race Relations Award," *Jet*, 21 November 1963, 27.

⁴²⁰ Arnold Shapiro to Don Baines, Box 4, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁴²¹ Carmel Tinkchell to Lerone Bennett, 20 January 1969, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Carmel Tinkchell to Lerone Bennett, 10 April 1969, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Carmel Tinkchell to Lerone Bennett, 23 July 1969, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Ruthe B. Stein, "Black Protests Spur Teaching of Negro History," *Jet*, 15 February 1968, 20-21.

⁴²² "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1964, 28.

the publication of issues such as the Emancipation Proclamation special, and the release of works such as *Before the Mayflower*, the magazine's readers had been 'exposed to what could well be considered a graduate course in Negro history.'⁴²³

The centrality of Bennett to this process was recognised in a 1965 profile by John Henrik Clarke in *Freedomways*. Through his description of Bennett as an exceptional 'social historian' who was an 'active participator in the civil rights movement as well as an astute interpreter of it', Clarke positioned Bennett on the intersections of academic and popular black history.⁴²⁴ Furthermore, his article offered a seamless analysis of Bennett's book-length texts alongside his contributions to *Ebony*.⁴²⁵ Clarke noted how *Before the Mayflower* stemmed from the pages of *Ebony*, and how Bennett's second black history series 'Pioneers in Protest' marked a 'biographical continuation of some of the chapters in *Before the Mayflower*.'⁴²⁶ Through doing so, Clarke reiterated the symbiotic relationship between *Ebony* and the output of the Book Division, and stressed the magazine's role in establishing Bennett as a prominent black popular historian and public intellectual.

Conclusion

In a 1973 issue of 'Backstage', *Ebony*'s editors felt obliged to remind its readers that although JPC was best known for publishing magazines, it also published books. 'In fact', the magazine contended, 'the Johnson Publishing Co. Book Division is rapidly expanding into an increasingly important operation in the JPC publishing chain', which by the early 1970s had published in excess of

⁴²³ "You Are Part Of His Past," *Ebony*, February 1965, 120.

⁴²⁴ Clarke, "Lerone Bennett," 481.

⁴²⁵ By 1965, Bennett had published a further three books through the Book Division; *Confrontation: Black and White* (1965), *The Negro Mood and Other Essays* (1964), and *What Manner of Man: a Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (1964).

⁴²⁶ Clarke, "Lerone Bennett," 487.

40 titles dealing with subjects that included biography, history, religion, sports, poetry and civil rights.⁴²⁷ This forgetfulness was not limited to the magazine's readership – despite the Book Division's role in blazing a trail for new black publishing enterprises during the 1960s, its significance has been neglected in the scholarship. However, this neglect has meant that the symbiotic relationship between the Book Division and *Ebony's* content, and the Book Division's role in supplementing and legitimating *Ebony's* historical coverage, has remained underexplored.⁴²⁸

The introduction of Bennett's first black history series, which culminated in the publication of *Before the Mayflower*, demonstrated the awareness of *Ebony's* editors and readers of broader debates into black historical production during the early 1960s. The response to the publication of *Before the Mayflower* reified underlying tensions regarding Bennett's popular representation as an 'academic' or 'amateur' historian, which had significant implications for the weight of *Ebony's* historical content. From a different perspective, Bennett's attempts to locate the 'black revolution' of the sixties within a 'long history of developing protest and social contention' would become even more important following the emergence of Black Power on the national stage.⁴²⁹ As the next chapter shows, this would also see Bennett move away from his efforts to present a more objective historical position during the early 1960s, and toward an embrace of history 'from a black perspective.'⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ "Backstage," *Ebony*, January 1973, 22.

⁴²⁸ Joyce, *Black Book Publishers in the United States*, 135-137.

⁴²⁹ Clarke, "Lerone Bennett," 489.

⁴³⁰ Washington, "Lerone Bennett, Jr.," Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

CHAPTER 3:

Of Time, Space and Revolution: Bennett, Black History and Black Power

As the previous two chapters have illustrated, shifts in *Ebony's* historical content and the development of the JPC Book Division helped to establish the magazine as a serious vehicle for the production and dissemination of black history. Headed by Bennett's efforts, *Ebony* sought to place the ongoing fight for racial equality within the broader history of black activism and protest. This approach would become even more important as black activists shifted further to the left during the 1960s. As Black Power advocates searched for alternatives to non-violent direct action, they vented their frustrations against white-dominated institutions such as 'businesses, government, police and American history itself.'⁴³¹ Accordingly, history became perhaps the most important scholarly discipline for the 'psychological and cultural empowerment and liberation' of activists during the Black Power era.⁴³²

Bennett was one of the most influential, and certainly the most visible figure, in a 'cultural, historical and political left-wing' which developed within JPC during the 1960s.⁴³³ Alongside writers such as Peter Bailey, Hoyt Fuller, and David Llorens, he looked to expand the company's coverage of nationalism, Black Power, and the Black Arts movement.⁴³⁴ Indeed, Bennett helped to familiarise *Ebony's* readers with the concept of Black Power nearly a year before Stokely Carmichael's call for Black power at the Meredith March in 1966. Bennett's role at JPC offered him a springboard to pursue new intellectual and

⁴³¹ Ron Keller, "Abraham Lincoln in African American Memory," in *Encyclopedia of African American History: Volume II*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 172.

⁴³² Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 31.

⁴³³ Fenderson, "Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic," 44.

⁴³⁴ Brown, "Souled Out," 114-116.

philosophical projects, which would help to consolidate his public image as a writer who was 'far more militant than the magazine he edited.'⁴³⁵ They also fed into an evolution of his coverage of black history in *Ebony*, which became increasingly focused on developing a historical mandate for the black revolution of the 1960s.⁴³⁶

The White Problem in America

Through articles such as 'The Mood of the Negro', Bennett had looked to contextualise broad shifts in civil rights activism during the first years of the 1960s by underscoring the role of history in the 'militant look backwards.'⁴³⁷ Such sentiments were picked up by newspapers such as the *Tri-State Defender*, which noted that 'negro leaders who lack the skills of mass mobilization are being pushed aside by younger, bolder men', and reiterated Bennett's claim that this shift was predicated on a rediscovery of black contributions to American history.⁴³⁸ In addition, the success of *Before the Mayflower* prompted a flurry of new publications by Bennett through the Book Division, including *The Negro Mood and Other Essays*, and *What Manner of Man: a Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* in 1964, and *Confrontation: Black and White* in 1965. Bennett's biography of King was the best-selling and most warmly received of these texts, with Illinois Governor Otto Kerner contending that its publication cemented Bennett a 'place of distinction in the literary world.'⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ Martin B. Duberman, *Howard Zinn: a Life on the Left* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 73.

⁴³⁶ Bennett, *The Challenge of Blackness* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1972), 35.

⁴³⁷ Bennett, "The Mood of the Negro," *Ebony*, July 1963, 27.

⁴³⁸ "Ebony Reports Gap Between Negroes and White Liberals," *Tri-State Defender*, 6 July 1963, 12.

⁴³⁹ "Candid Look at Leader in Civil Rights Struggle," *Fresno Bee*, 7 February 1965, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers; Carmel Tinkchell to Lerone Bennett, 1 March 1967, Box 25, Lerone

The response to *Confrontation: Black and White*, and in particular *The Negro Mood and Other Essays*, was more mixed. Both studies looked to situate the black revolution of the 1960s 'within the context of a long history of developing protest and social contention.'⁴⁴⁰ As part of his tribute to Bennett in *Freedomways*, John Henrik Clarke praised both *The Negro Mood* and *Confrontation* for calling attention to the 'new realities in American race relations', and for bringing his reader face to face 'with the uncomfortable truth about America's racial conflict.'⁴⁴¹ However, prominent black historians such as J. Saunders Redding attacked *The Negro Mood* for expressing 'cloudiness of thought and factual indigestion.'⁴⁴² This uncertainty was mirrored by purchasers, with *The Negro Mood* suffering from a much higher return rate than Bennett's other books. Indeed, a number of book-keeping statements to Bennett during the years following its initial release show that the text attracted a net loss in sales due to more copies being returned than being sold.⁴⁴³

Despite such criticisms, this flurry of publications fed into new opportunities for Bennett to express his views outside of *Ebony's* pages. He appeared on radio and as a principal speaker at civil rights conventions and events, and contributed to television seminars on black history.⁴⁴⁴ On a local level, Bennett lectured on black history at Chicago schools and public housing

Bennett, Jr. Papers; Otto Kerner to Lerone Bennett, 6 May 1965, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁴⁴⁰ George A. Sewell and Margaret L. Dwight, *Mississippi Black History Makers* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 279.

⁴⁴¹ Clarke, "Lerone Bennett," 491-492.

⁴⁴² J. Saunders Redding, "New Books On Race," *Afro-American*, 28 November 1964, A2.

⁴⁴³ Carmel Tinkchell to Lerone Bennett, 1 March 1967, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Carmel Tinkchell to Lerone Bennett, 9 October 1967, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Doris Saunders to Lerone Bennett, 9 June 1966, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁴⁴⁴ "Association Marks Negro Science Gains," *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 February 1965, 25; "Civil Rights Leaders Slated for AKA Meet," *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 July 1964, 21; "Ebony's Bennett on Philly TV Negro History Series," *Jet*, 1 October 1964, 52; "History Group Sets Contest for Youths," *New York Amsterdam News*, 6 November 1965, 52; "Radio," *New York Times*, 19 June 1965, 59.

projects.⁴⁴⁵ Anti-Willis protesters attempted to present Chicago mayor Richard Daley with a copy of *The Negro Mood* as part of demonstrations against his School Superintendent, and Bennett himself would be arrested and jailed at a march against Willis in July 1965.⁴⁴⁶ Similarly, Bennett's criticism of middle class black leadership and white liberals put forward in 'The Mood of the Negro' was expanded on through public addresses where he described the 'red-hot- rage in the Negro ghetto.'⁴⁴⁷ In an address to Syracuse University students in March 1965, Bennett declared that the current racial climate necessitated radical solutions, and that 'we need to make revolutionary changes now.'⁴⁴⁸

Such sentiments would be addressed more comprehensively in *Ebony's* 1965 special issue 'The WHITE Problem in America', which painted an unflattering image of the continuing failure of white America to address the nation's systemic problems. The tone was set by Johnson, who in a publisher's statement pinpointed the role of white Americans in prohibiting black progress. He asked the magazine's readers to consider who had acted as the key barrier to racial equality throughout American history, before placing blame squarely at the feet of 'the unthinking white man – Mr. Charlie, Whitey, The Man – the unthinking white man who is the symbol to Negroes of all those whites who have "stood in the doorways" to keep the Negro back.'⁴⁴⁹

Johnson's statement was taken up by Bennett, who looked to further resituate the question of racial inequality as a 'white problem' - not just through

⁴⁴⁵ "Negro History Event Planned at Carver High," *Chicago Defender*, 27 February 1965, 17; "Set Bennett Lecture on Negro History," *Chicago Defender*, 13 March 1965, 4.

⁴⁴⁶ "Author Lerone Bennett Jailed," *Jet*, 15 July 1965, 45; "Leaders Set Night Marches Here," *Chicago Daily Defender*, 22 June 1965, 3; Unnamed Photo No. 27, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers; Unnamed Photo No. 29, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers; Unnamed Photo No. 32, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁴⁴⁷ "Editor of Ebony Reproves Churches and Militants," *The Sun*, 16 September 1963, 17.

⁴⁴⁸ "Ebony's Bennett Predicts Unrest in Chapel Speech," *Daily Orange*, 3 March 1965, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files Collection.

⁴⁴⁹ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1965, 27.

the ways in which individual white citizens had formed a burden for blacks throughout American history, but also the ways in which whiteness had proved a liability for American democracy.⁴⁵⁰ Through doing so, he looked to reframe popular understandings of racial inequality which had characterised American sociological and historical debate since Du Bois had posed the immortal question; 'how does it feel to be a problem?'⁴⁵¹ Bennett's words were reinforced by figures such as John Oliver Killens, and echoed the sentiments of earlier writers who had sought to invert the question of 'the negro problem.'⁴⁵² Richard Wright's conception of antiracist universalism had imagined black history not as the 'American dilemma' but as 'America's metaphor', and the voice of the black American as 'the most representative voice of America and of oppressed people anywhere in the world.'⁴⁵³ Similarly, Bennett sought to de-centre whiteness from hegemonic understandings of the black past, whilst attempting to resituate whiteness at the heart of the nation's 'race problem.'

From a different perspective, 'The WHITE Problem in America' looked to reframe discussion of *Ebony's* own history. Its publication, coming just two months before the magazine's twentieth anniversary special, was held up as evidence of *Ebony's* shift from 'materialism to militancy.'⁴⁵⁴ Similarly, the special served as a rebuttal to critics such as Eddie Ellis of *Liberator* magazine. Citing factors including the magazine's reliance on white corporate advertising, Ellis

⁴⁵⁰ Bennett, "The White Problem in America," *Ebony*, August 1965, 29.

⁴⁵¹ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 11; Thomas K. Nakamaya and Judith N. Martin, "The 'White Problem' in Intercultural Communication Research and Pedagogy," in *Whiteness, Pedagogy, Performance: Dis/placing Race*, ed. Leda M. Cooks and Jennifer S. Simpson (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 111.

⁴⁵² John O. Killens, "Black Man's Burden," *Ebony*, August 1965, 173; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: the Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1944).

⁴⁵³ Nikhil Pal Singh, "Towards an Effective Antiracism," in *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, ed. Manning Marable (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2000), 37.

⁴⁵⁴ "From Materialism to Militancy: Changing Times Saw Change in Format," *Philadelphia Tribune*, 4 December 1965, 5; Langston Hughes, "Ebony's Nativity," *Ebony*, November 1965, 40-41.

declared that 'if *Ebony* can't even be loyal to the 750,000 Negroes who read the magazine, we know *Ebony* has NO identification with, or loyalties to, the other 30 million BLACK captives in America.'⁴⁵⁵ Yet the issues of *Ebony* which paralleled Ellis' critique featured scores of letters that applauded the 'WHITE Problem' special as a new high in black journalism.⁴⁵⁶ Similarly, readers noted that Bennett's incisive commentary 'set the tone for most of the articles which followed' and championed his ability to offer 'ideological clarity in the cause of America's malingering sickness.'⁴⁵⁷

Black History during Reconstruction

Ebony's twentieth anniversary special in November 1965 also marked the start of a new history series by Bennett titled 'Black Power.' It set out to explicitly link the ongoing struggle for black equality to a radical history of black protest and political power, through focusing on the gains made by blacks during Reconstruction.⁴⁵⁸ Bennett started in South Carolina, where the apparent perils of black Reconstruction had been hyperbolised through D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*.⁴⁵⁹ Here, Bennett argued, was a clear manifestation of Black Power – a place where even the most casual of observers could not have failed to note the 'overwhelming presence and reality of blackness.' The historian declared that no matter how embittered planters sought to shut out the political

⁴⁵⁵ Eddie Ellis, "Is *Ebony* a Negro Magazine?," *Liberator*, October 1965, 4-5, and November 1965, 18-19.

⁴⁵⁶ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, October 1965, 10-18; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1965, 16-18.

⁴⁵⁷ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, October 1965, 10-11.

⁴⁵⁸ Bennett, "Black Power Part I," 28.

⁴⁵⁹ Melvyn Stokes, *D. W. Griffith's the Birth of a Nation: a History of 'the Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 205

transformations which gripped the South, the rise of Black Power was something they 'could not ignore.'⁴⁶⁰

While this article was the first in a series dedicated to Black Power, it was far from Bennett's, or indeed *Ebony's* first engagement with the concept. As noted in chapter one, Bennett had used the phrase during his 'Negro History' series, and in his earlier profile of Marcus Garvey.⁴⁶¹ Going back into the 1950s, Rhonda Williams has pointed to an *Ebony* profile of Paul Robeson in 1957 as marking the print debut of black power in the American press alongside Richard Wright's 1954 travelogue *Black Power*.⁴⁶² Written by Carl Rowan, the profile gave readers a complex profile of Robeson, offering a quasi-tragic depiction of his fall from grace, but declaring that the activist was 'convinced that he will have the last laugh...that the day will come when American Negroes will find that "black power" holds the key to their freedom.'⁴⁶³

Through his 'Black Power' series, Bennett drew a direct link between his depiction of the black past, and the continuing struggle for equality. 'Look close at this scene as it stands now in 1867', Bennett informed his readers, 'and mark well the revolutionary mood of the Negro masses.'⁴⁶⁴ In slipping between the use of 'black' and 'Negro' throughout his 'Black Power' articles, Bennett's writing created a rhetorical bridge between Reconstruction and the black revolution of the 1960s. Central to this idea was the notion of a 'Second Reconstruction', which the historian took from C. Vann Woodward's concept of the 'New

⁴⁶⁰ Bennett, "Black Power Part I," 28.

⁴⁶¹ Bennett, "Black Power in Dixie," 84; Bennett, "The Ghost of Marcus Garvey," 61.

⁴⁶² Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: the Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 59-60.

⁴⁶³ Carl T. Rowan, "Has Paul Robeson Betrayed the Negro?," *Ebony*, October 1957, 42; Lindsey R. Swindall, *Paul Robeson: a Life of Activism and Art* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 155.

⁴⁶⁴ Bennett, "Black Power Part I," 38.

Reconstruction' outlined in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.⁴⁶⁵ Bennett informed his readers that an in-depth account of black gains during the 'First Reconstruction' would help them gain critical insights into 'the Second Reconstruction we are now undergoing.'⁴⁶⁶

Similarly, the mood of black rebellion which proliferated during Reconstruction provided an important blueprint for achieving black equality in the 1960s. Bennett pointed to a speech by Alfred Gray in reflecting the 'defiant spirit of the Negro masses' in the aftermath of the civil war. Addressing crowds in Uniontown, Alabama, Gray declared 'Am I afraid to fight the white men for my rights? No! I may go to hell, my home is hell, but the white man shall go there with me.'⁴⁶⁷ Such an image offered an aggressive reinterpretation of the 'crippling assumptions of racial inferiority and predetermined judgements on the period's tragic errors' put forward by the Dunning School. Bennett's Black Power series can be seen to have reiterated the message of Du Bois' 1935 text *Black Reconstruction*, which had championed the key role played by free blacks in the restructuring of the South.⁴⁶⁸

The historicity of Black Power would become an even more important aspect of Bennett's series as the Black Power slogan rose to national prominence. Following its fifth instalment in April 1965, Bennett's 'Black Power' series was placed on a brief hiatus due to his ill health.⁴⁶⁹ In its absence, popular conceptions of Black Power were realigned by events at the Meredith March in the summer of 1966. James Meredith's solitary 'March against Fear'

⁴⁶⁵ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

⁴⁶⁶ Bennett, "Black Power Part I," 28.

⁴⁶⁷ Bennett, "Black Power Part II" *Ebony*, December 1965, 59.

⁴⁶⁸ Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 111-113.

⁴⁶⁹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, May 1966, 26.

from Memphis to Jackson had been violently disrupted by a lone white gunman after less than 30 miles. In the aftermath of the attack, a number of different civil rights groups converged to continue the march, including SNCC and their charismatic new chairman Stokely Carmichael.⁴⁷⁰ The relationship between marching activists and state troopers became increasingly fractious, and Carmichael was arrested and imprisoned on the 16th of June as protestors reached Greenwood, Mississippi. Following his release, Carmichael fumed that 'the only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over.... What we gonna start saying now is Black Power!'⁴⁷¹

As Simon Hall has noted, the emergence of Black Power was seen as a 'dangerous new force' by its critics, and a concept which marked a juncture between non-violent civil rights activism and an increasingly revolutionary age.⁴⁷² Black Power came to be defined as 'the cutting edge of black activism, a movement whose militancy contrasted with the more measured tone of the civil rights movement and seemed to signal a break from past modes of black activism.'⁴⁷³ This centred on the notion of Black Power as a new phenomenon, and as a new 'salvation' or 'threat' to race relations in America. Yet Carmichael would go on to declare that the concept was nothing new, and that black activists had been talking about Black Power in the Delta for years. 'The only difference was that this time the national media were there.'⁴⁷⁴ Indeed, Carmichael's initial definition of Black Power seemed in many ways similar to

⁴⁷⁰ Aram Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 20-24.

⁴⁷¹ Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars: the Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 228.

⁴⁷² Simon Hall, "The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966-1969," *The Historian* 69 (2007): 50.

⁴⁷³ Peniel E. Joseph, "The Black Power Movement: a State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 96 (2009): 755.

⁴⁷⁴ Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready For Revolution: the Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 507.

Bennett's descriptions of Black Power during Reconstruction, with an emphasis on black electoral representation and political power.

We pick the brother and make sure he fulfils *our* needs. Black Power doesn't mean anti-white, violence, separatism or any other racist things the press says it means. It's saying, 'Look, buddy, we're not laying a vote on you unless you lay so many schools, hospitals, playgrounds and jobs on us.'⁴⁷⁵

While Carmichael's call for Black Power generated disquiet, the unanimous endorsement of Black Power by CORE at the organisation's National Convention in early July carried more serious implications. In response to CORE's actions, Roy Wilkins placed the NAACP in strong opposition to Black Power and denounced the concept as equivalent to 'black death.'⁴⁷⁶ The *New York Times* declared that the unity of civil rights organisations had been shattered by the call for Black Power, direct links between the slogan and outbreaks of ghetto violence.⁴⁷⁷ A key source of anxiety for press outlets regarding Black Power was their uncertainty over what it meant. The *U.S News & World Report* encapsulated this anxiety in an article on the eleventh of July titled 'Negro Cry: "Black Power!" – What Does It Mean?' A frantic string of rhetorical questions underlined the periodical's concerns: 'Violence ahead?...what does "black power" mean? Does it mean "black supremacy"? Is it a tactic of intimidation? Are Negroes now to be fired up for more violent actions?'⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ Gordon Parks, "Whip of Black Power," *Life*, 19 May 1967, 82.

⁴⁷⁶ "Black Power Issue Splits Civil Righters," *Columbus Dispatch*, 10 July 1966, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files; Jack Jones, "NAACP Chief Assails Call For 'Black Power'," *New York Post*, 6 July 1966, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files.

⁴⁷⁷ "Black Power," *New York Times*, 10 July 1966, 1.

⁴⁷⁸ "Negro Cry: "Black Power!" – What Does It Mean?," *U.S News and World Report*, 11 July 1966, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files.

Although more venerable civil rights organisations such as the NAACP were initially highly critical of Carmichael's call for Black Power, this response ignored the common ground shared between black activists in the old and new guard of the movement.⁴⁷⁹ Similarly, anxieties over the potential meaning of Black Power expressed through mainstream American media were exacerbated by an emphasis on the slogan's perceived ambiguity, rather than a measured attempt to contextualise the concept's origins. This is puzzling given that, as Van Deburg has illustrated, the slogan had a varied literary and rhetorical history which incorporated figures such as Adam Clayton Powell, Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, and of course Bennett.⁴⁸⁰ The disregard of Bennett's 'Black Power' series is particularly surprising given that it offered arguably the most detailed and comprehensive literary usage of the slogan in the build-up to the Meredith March: it was widely available through its publication in one of America's most popular magazines, and it had repeatedly and explicitly made the connection between Black Power during the 'First Reconstruction' and its relevance to the 'Second Reconstruction.'

Against the growing unease of mainstream America media, Bennett's 'Black Power' series returned in July 1966 with a focus on Florida and other states in the Deep South where black voters during Reconstruction held large influence, but ultimately little decision-making power.⁴⁸¹ Bennett made no reference to how popular perspectives on Black Power had fundamentally shifted in the period between the fifth edition of his 'Black Power' series in April and its sixth instalment in July. However, his article drew explicit parallels

⁴⁷⁹ Hall, "The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966-1969," 52.

⁴⁸⁰ Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, 33-34.

⁴⁸¹ Bennett, "Black Power Part VI," *Ebony*, July 1966, 58.

between other contemporary events, such as the refusal of the Georgia legislature to seat Julian Bond and the Selma to Montgomery March, to reinforce his belief in a living, cyclical history. Indeed, Bennett contended that the events of Reconstruction, rather than the Selma March, offered a far more radical display of racial protest and affirmation.⁴⁸²

Carmichael and the Historicity of Black Power

A little over two months after Carmichael's call for Black Power at the Meredith March, *Ebony* offered an explosive profile of the SNCC frontman in its September 1966 issue, written by Bennett. Spread across nine pages, 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power' offered one of the most in-depth accounts of Carmichael's concept of Black Power to be published in the immediate aftermath of the Meredith March. Joseph has contended that Bennett's dynamic profile envisioned Carmichael as 'a charismatic, brilliant cosmopolitan', and cast him as 'the soul of a new movement.'⁴⁸³ Certainly Bennett's descriptions of Carmichael fuelled his potential as the movement's new zeitgeist, with the *Ebony* historian arguing that he 'walks like Sidney Poitier, talks like Harry Belafonte and thinks like the post-Muslim Malcolm X.'⁴⁸⁴

On first glance, Bennett's article appeared to tap into the sensationalist coverage of Carmichael which had proliferated in the aftermath of the Meredith March. The article was headed by an imposing photograph of Carmichael shouting into a microphone at a rally. Below this image, Bennett's opening sentence declared that 'power was changing colors, and Stokely Carmichael, America's most controversial young man, was going where the action was.' The

⁴⁸² Ibid., 58.

⁴⁸³ Joseph, *Stokely: a Life* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2014), 126.

⁴⁸⁴ Bennett, "Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power," *Ebony*, September 1966, 26.

second description of Carmichael which greeted readers was the image of him stripped to the waist and speeding down a South Georgia highway in a Ford micro-bus, 'taking curves at 70 m.p.h.' As Carmichael attempted to pass another vehicle, its driver blocked his path before shouting a racial epithet out of the window. The cars screeched to a halt, and Carmichael bolted out of the door of the micro-bus with a SNCC aide to confront the white driver and his companions, who retreated into their car and sped away.

Journalists such as A. S. Doc Young believed Bennett's description of 'such childishness as racing down a Southern highway' merely highlighted Carmichael's position as a rash and injurious figure.⁴⁸⁵ A number of the magazine's readers also shared Young's opinion of Carmichael. Mattie Franklin declared that Bennett's article demonstrated that Carmichael was little but an 'irresponsible, jive talking juvenile', while James Murray declared that Carmichael had 'hurt the problem more than he can ever help it.'⁴⁸⁶ However, through his tense description of Carmichael's highway showdown, Bennett can be seen to have subverted his image as just another one of the Black Power 'hotheads'.⁴⁸⁷ Bennett offered an image of controlled aggression, with Carmichael standing his ground in the face of white antagonism and responding with a show of self-confidence and power: 'there was no bravado, no bragging...something that needed to be done had been done. A man had challenged a man – and a man had answered.'⁴⁸⁸

It was not by coincidence that Bennett opened his profile of Carmichael with a story that echoed the type of 'naked power struggle between two men'

⁴⁸⁵ Young, "The Big Beat," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 1 December 1966, A10.

⁴⁸⁶ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1966, 16.

⁴⁸⁷ John Knight, "Power Militants Blacken a Hot Summer," *Miami Herald*, 17 July 1966, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files.

⁴⁸⁸ Bennett, "Stokely Carmichael," 25.

which had characterised many of the articles in his 'Black Power' series.⁴⁸⁹ Bennett explicitly sought to draw Carmichael into his broader consideration of living history, and to establish direct links between Black Power in the first and second Reconstructions. In part, this can be seen through the image of Carmichael himself as an embodiment of earlier black activist philosophies. Bennett recalled an encounter between Carmichael and Lewis Michaux, a Harlem Book Store owner. As Carmichael viewed an image of Malcolm X, Michaux informed him that 'Malcolm X is still living. When you walked in, Malcolm smiled.' This sentiment was also expressed through the 'peripatetic' nature of the interview itself, which ranged from the Bronx to the cotton fields of Lowndes County. Bennett depicted Carmichael as a racial sojourner and an activist who was 'meeting challenges and transcending them' on a national and international scale.⁴⁹⁰

In the issues which followed Bennett's profile of Carmichael, *Ebony* offered two quite different depictions of Black Power. The first came from moderate civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, who warned that Black Power was a 'phony cry', and that a recommitment to nonviolence offered 'the only road to freedom.'⁴⁹¹ Like many commentators before him, King's remarks looked to situate the emergence of Black Power within the particular climate of urban unrest cultivated by the sixties. However, King also noted the deeply rooted inequalities which underpinned urban revolts, suggesting that 'these violent eruptions are unplanned, uncontrollable temper tantrums brought on by long neglected poverty, humiliation, oppression and exploitation.' Indeed, the

⁴⁸⁹ Bennett, "Black Power Part V," *Ebony*, April 1966, 121.

⁴⁹⁰ Bennett, "Stokely Carmichael," 26.

⁴⁹¹ King, "Nonviolence: the Only Road to Freedom," *Ebony*, October 1966, 27; Rowan, "Crisis in Civil Rights Leadership," *Ebony*, November 1966, 27.

only way in which King could address this disparity was through taking an example from history, in the case of the Sharpeville Massacre. *Ebony* reprinted images taken from Bennett's original Sharpeville story from 1960 alongside King's fear that 'wholesale slaughter' might be the result if black militants attempted to wage open war on American society.

This tension was also evident in the November issue of *The Progressive*, where King asserted that the 'new mood' of black militancy fed directly out of the 'old way of life – economic coercion, terrorism, murder and inhuman contempt.'⁴⁹² Despite acknowledging the deeply rooted causes of Black Power, King nonetheless asserted his belief that 'the call for 'black power' will rapidly diminish...The 'black power' slogan comes not from a sense of strength but from a feeling of weakness and desperation. It will vanish when Negroes are effectively organized and supported by self-confidence.' Similarly, in the November 1965 issue of *Ebony*, Carl Rowan offered a deeply critical depiction of Black Power as a 'plain old-fashioned hoax.' Both Rowan and King's concerns were picked up by mainstream press outlets, which reiterated their concerns over the 'rantings' of Carmichael and other Black Power activists.⁴⁹³ The *Philadelphia Tribune* supported Rowan's position by contending that he was 'one of the nation's leading Negro journalists', and reinforced his contention that activists who embraced the 'false ideas' of Black Power were 'inviting disaster.'⁴⁹⁴

Yet for Carmichael and Bennett, the potential of Black Power was intimately connected to a historical reservoir of discipline and strength. King's

⁴⁹² King, "Black Power," *The Progressive*, November 1966, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files.

⁴⁹³ John Averill, "Drop in White Backing Jolts Negroes," *Boston Globe*, 12 October 1966, 1; "White Power," *Washington Post*, 27 October 1966, A24;

⁴⁹⁴ "Carl T. Rowan Claims 'Black Power' is a Hoax," *Philadelphia Tribune*, 5 November 1966, 3.

image of Black Power as a crisis of self-confidence sat at odds with the highway confrontation retold by Bennett, where a timeless challenge to black autonomy had been matched. Similarly, Bennett argued that the impact of Black Power during Reconstruction demonstrated that activists should not fear its radical potential, but embrace it. In the seventh instalment of his 'Black Power' series, Bennett asserted that descriptions of Black Power as monstrous by southern white journalists was correct. 'It is always monstrous' prophesised Bennett, 'when the poor, the downtrodden and the disinherited present their bills at the bar of history.'⁴⁹⁵ However, whilst Bennett depicted a society 'turned bottom side up, with the black people on top and the white people on the bottom', it held none of the chaos and 'wholesale slaughter' foretold by King.

Bennett's 'Black Power' series did receive some exposure following the emergence of Black Power on a national stage. For example, a feature in the *Bay State Banner* in early November previewed a speech on Black Power Bennett was due to make in Boston on the 12th of November. The *Banner* noted that this was a topic that Bennett had already discussed in *Ebony*, and quoted his contention that 'power is a precondition of the human. Without power men cannot be men.'⁴⁹⁶ The day after Bennett's address, the *Boston Globe* reported on his speech, and noted in passing that Bennett claimed 'he first coined the phrase "Black Power."⁴⁹⁷ Yet Bennett's series was largely ignored, despite having set out a clear vision of Black Power over a period of 12 months. It was with no small sense of irony that Bennett's 'Black Power' series followed on from reports of a 'white backlash' to the emergence of Black Power in the 1960s

⁴⁹⁵ Bennett, "Black Power Part VII," *Ebony*, October 1966, 152.

⁴⁹⁶ "Ebony Editor Will Speak at Arlington Street Church," *Bay State Banner*, 5 November 1966, 5.

⁴⁹⁷ "Negro Editor Blames Whites For Racism," *Boston Globe*, 13 November 1966, 54.

by documenting 'the first white backlash' to Black Power during Reconstruction.⁴⁹⁸

In the absence of sustained media coverage, it was left to Bennett's readers to reiterate his connection between Black Power during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the magazine's 'Letters to the Editor' section. A host of different readers praised Bennett's coverage and explained how his series had challenged them to think about their own history in new ways.⁴⁹⁹ Reader John Edwards contended that he was browsing through old copies of the magazine from 1965 when he came across Bennett's series. Upon reading it, he 'suddenly knew what Mr. Carmichael meant by the term and where he got his now popular war cry.' Edwards contended that Carmichael was 'evidently trying to regain for the Southern black man the birth right that was snatched from him almost 100 years ago', as documented through Bennett's 'Black Power' series.⁵⁰⁰

Of Time, Space and Revolution

The final instalment of Bennett's 'Black Power' series was published in January 1967, where the editor warned of the destructive power of compromise for Black Power and black progress.⁵⁰¹ In the months that followed, some of the magazine's other contributors attempted to depoliticise and dehistoricise *Ebony's* discussion of Black Power. For example, Paul Wyche's September 1967 feature on strongman Hercules McCoy celebrated the performer's 'own

⁴⁹⁸ Bennett, "Black Power Part VIII," *Ebony*, December 1966, 146; William Price, "Negroes Division over Black Power Widens," *National Guardian*, 22 October 1966, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files.

⁴⁹⁹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, February 1966, 12-14; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, March 1966, 13-14; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, June 1966, 12; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1966, 13-14; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1966, 16.

⁵⁰⁰ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1966, 13.

⁵⁰¹ Bennett, "Black Power Part IX," *Ebony*, January 1967, 114.

brand' of Black Power as a racially reconciliatory force.⁵⁰² Wyche contended that McCoy's 'Black Power' act had helped to stabilise a tense encounter between police and black protestors in Tampa during the summer of 1967.⁵⁰³ Similarly, Morrie Turner attempted to defuse the slogan using comedy, profiling the 'Black Power Warbler' as part of an article which offered 'An Elementary Guide to Civil Rights Bird Watching.'⁵⁰⁴

By contrast, Bennett became increasingly outspoken on the subject of Black Power both inside and outside Johnson Publishing Company. He called for a 'TVA for the slums' – a massive federal programme which would give black people 'power over themselves and over the institutions of their community.'⁵⁰⁵ He contended that the election of Richard Hatcher in Gary and the 12th Street riot in Detroit were both examples of Black Power, and that 'it is up to America to decide which kind it wants.'⁵⁰⁶ Bennett's 'Black Power' series would also be published as *Black Power, U.S.A.: the Human Side of Reconstruction 1867-1877*, which joined a host of studies including Floyd Barbour's *The Black Power Revolt*, Joanne Grant's *Black Protest* and Harold Cruse's *Rebellion or Revolution* that looked to anthologise 'the genealogy and nationalist roots of Black Power.'⁵⁰⁷ The book would be advertised under the headline 'Black Power is 100 years old.'⁵⁰⁸

Two months after the release of *Black Power, U.S.A.*, Bennett published 'Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?', which became one of the most

⁵⁰² Paul Wyche, "A Real, Live Superman," *Ebony*, September 1967, 97.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁰⁴ Morrie Turner, "An Elementary Guide to Civil Rights Bird Watching," *Ebony*, March 1967, 68.

⁵⁰⁵ Bennett, "How To Stop Riots," *Ebony*, October 1967, 35; "How To Stop Riots," *Chicago Daily Defender*, 2 October 1967, 13.

⁵⁰⁶ "Must Free People in U.S.," *Kansas City Star*, 10 December 1967, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files.

⁵⁰⁷ "Backstage," *Ebony*, December 1967, 22; Williams, *Concrete Demands*, 151.

⁵⁰⁸ "Black Power USA," *Ebony*, December 1967, 117.

controversial articles to ever appear in *Ebony*.⁵⁰⁹ Through his earlier writing, Bennett had looked to reassess Lincoln's significance by shifting focus from Lincoln's role as the 'Great Emancipator' to the efforts of blacks during slavery and the civil war in securing their own freedom.⁵¹⁰ However, his guarded critique of Lincoln in *Ebony*'s 1963 Emancipation Proclamation special was largely in keeping with the perspective of moderate historians such as Carl Sandburg and Benjamin Quarles.⁵¹¹ Yet through his 1968 article, Bennett moved far beyond his earlier position to declare that on every issue relating to black Americans, Lincoln was 'the very essence of the white supremacist with good intentions.'⁵¹²

This critique was part of a historiographical trend which looked to move away from the work of older black historians such as John Hope Franklin, who continued to present Lincoln in a largely positive light.⁵¹³ Bennett's article offered one of the most high profile examples of the 'process of cutting loose from white America' for black nationalist historians.⁵¹⁴ Similarly, Bennett's article fed into the rejection of 'Lincoln, the Proclamation, or anything else white liberals had to offer' by Black Power advocates.⁵¹⁵ It resonated with the sentiments of figures such as Julius Lester, who articulated his own opposition to Lincoln in *Look Out Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama*. Lester

⁵⁰⁹ Bennett, "Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?," 35.

⁵¹⁰ Bennett, "Ten Most Dramatic Events in Negro History," 31.

⁵¹¹ Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962); Mike Quigley, "Carl Sandburg," *Ebony*, September 1963, 158.

⁵¹² Bennett, "Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?," 37.

⁵¹³ Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963).

⁵¹⁴ Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln in Text and Context: Collected Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 100.

⁵¹⁵ Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: the End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 247.

contended that 'Blacks have no reason to feel grateful to Abraham Lincoln...he was in office to preserve the Union, not free the slaves.'⁵¹⁶

Despite his substantial readership in *Ebony*, Bennett had continued to be overlooked in national debates about black history and civil rights – as demonstrated by the wholesale neglect of his 'Black Power' series in the rush to judgement of Carmichael and other Black Power advocates. However, the impact of his article on Lincoln propelled Bennett into the national spotlight, and ignited a heated debate within the academy and mainstream American media.⁵¹⁷ Arthur Zilversmit has contended that Bennett's article was a 'literary equivalent of the Black Power Movement, of the split in the civil rights coalition, and of the frightening violence of the summer of 1967.'⁵¹⁸ Congressman John Shimkus would later attest that Bennett's 1968 article on Lincoln sent 'ripples across the academic and cultural world.'⁵¹⁹

To substantiate the article's creditability, *Ebony* reminded its readers of Bennett's credentials as a 'sensitive writer and meticulous researcher.'⁵²⁰ Barry Schwartz has contended that many black press outlets 'congratulated Bennett for his careful research and endorsed his conclusions.'⁵²¹ By contrast, a number of prominent white critics rejected Bennett's article out of hand as an inflammatory and irresponsible piece. This response was led by Herbert

⁵¹⁶ Julius Lester, *Look Out Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama* (London: Allison & Busby, 1970), 58.

⁵¹⁷ John M. Barr, "Holding Up a Flawed Mirror to the American Soul: Abraham Lincoln in the Writing of Lerone Bennett, Jr.," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 35 (2014): 43-45; Jackie Hogan, *Lincoln, Inc.: Selling the Sixteenth President in Contemporary America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 92.

⁵¹⁸ Arthur Zilversmit, "Lincoln and the Problem of Race: A Decade of Interpretations," in *For the Vast Future Also: Essays from the Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, ed. Thomas F. Schwartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 4.

⁵¹⁹ John Shimkus, "Abraham Lincoln Interpretative Center," *Congressional Record* 146:8 (2000): 11265.

⁵²⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, February 1968, 22.

⁵²¹ Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 166.

Mitgang, who published a bristling riposte in the *New York Times Magazine* on the 11th of February titled 'Was Lincoln Just a Honkie?'⁵²² In his article, Mitgang explicitly connected new interpretations of Lincoln's legacy to cries of Black Power which could 'enflame American cities in a new Civil War.' The writer's use of the word 'Honkie' sought to situate the *Ebony* historian as an anti-white polemicist and link him to figures such as H. Rap Brown, who had incited outrage in his description of Lyndon Baines Johnson as a 'white honky cracker' and an 'outlaw from Texas.'⁵²³

Mitgang's review led to a contentious back and forth debate between the *New York Times* editor and Bennett, which was contested on the pages of the newspaper's 'Letters' section throughout March 1968. Bennett declared Mitgang's assessment to be 'a parody of the traditional Lincoln hagiography.'⁵²⁴ The historian contended that in keeping with most Lincoln apologists, 'Mr. Mitgang finds himself arguing desperately and rather pathetically with Lincoln.' Bennett highlighted a number of perceived flaws in Mitgang's critique, before suggesting that 'I can only marvel at Mr. Mitgang's mastery of McCarthyism.'⁵²⁵ Mitgang was unwilling to let the matter lie, and responded in another letter which reiterated his earlier criticism's of Bennett's essay, and warned that Lincoln should 'not be put in the meat grinder of black nationalist revisionism. To do so is slanted, up-dated history that ignores the time, the place and the man.'⁵²⁶

As John Barr has acknowledged, while the quarrel between Mitgang and Bennett marked the most high profile fall-out to the latter's article, it was far from

⁵²² Herbert Mitgang, "Was Lincoln Just A Honkie?," *New York Times*, 11 February 1968, SM35.

⁵²³ Carson, *In Struggle*, 256.

⁵²⁴ Bennett, "In Search of the Real Lincoln," *New York Times*, 3 March 1968, SM6.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, SM7.

⁵²⁶ Mitgang, "The Time, The Place, The Man," *New York Times*, 17 March 1968, SM16.

the only response.⁵²⁷ Mitgang's rebuke was taken up by scholars such as Mark Krug, who suggested that Bennett would be at least partially to blame if racial tension spilled over into violence as it had done in the summer of 1967.⁵²⁸ The response of many critics to Bennett's article did little beyond attempting to position him within a wave of scholarship by black pseudointellectuals who were driven by an 'emotional compulsion to compensate for the neglect of white scholars.'⁵²⁹ Yet by dismissing Bennett's article as the kneejerk response of an anti-white polemicist, or by connecting this depiction to reductive stereotypes of black militants, critics demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of Bennett's Black Power philosophy, and the centrality of black history to its formation.

Such accusations ignored Bennett's assertion that the successes of Black Power during Reconstruction were part of a collaborative racial project between liberal white reformers and pioneering black politicians. Similarly, they overlooked Bennett's celebration of radical white abolitionists such as Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison in his 'Pioneers in Protest' series. Indeed, when the series was published as a book the first edition featured John Brown on the cover alongside a number of black pioneers.⁵³⁰ This marked an extension of Bennett's previous praise for Brown, with the historian contending in *The Negro Mood* that 'there was in John Brown a complete identification with the oppressed...John Brown was a Negro.'⁵³¹ Bennett also reserved special

⁵²⁷ Barr, "Holding Up a Mirror to the American Soul," 48.

⁵²⁸ Zilversmit, "Lincoln and the Problem of Race," 5.

⁵²⁹ W. Burghardt Turner, "Joel Augustus Rogers: an Afro-American Historian," *Negro History Bulletin*, February 1972, 35.

⁵³⁰ "Pioneers in Protest," *Ebony*, November 1968, 178.

⁵³¹ Bennett, *The Negro Mood*, 100-101.

praise for Charles Summer and Thaddeus Stevens, whom he described as the 'white architects of black liberation.'⁵³²

Pioneers in Protest was significant for another reason - it highlighted Bennett's increasing use of the rhetoric of 'liberation' in reference to both black history and black activism. The term had almost never been used in Bennett's writing during the first half of the 1960s, but the publication of Carmichael and Charles Hamilton's *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation* in 1967, alongside the work of black theologians such as James Cone, helped to centralise the concept of liberation within the lexicon of Black Power activists.⁵³³ The concept of liberation helped to connect the philosophies of separatists, cultural nationalists, Marxists and black capitalists around the central goal of racial emancipation. This was apparent through *Ebony's* 1969 special on 'The Black Revolution', where a diverse cast of contributors including David Llorens, Larry Neal, Huey P. Newton, Alex Poinsett and James Turner offered different strategies for advancing 'the most historic liberation struggle in human history.'⁵³⁴

For Bennett, the concept of liberation would become central to his developing understanding of black history as a 'living history.' This was most clearly expressed through articles in *Ebony's* 1969 and 1970 special issues. Firstly, in 'Of Time, Space and Revolution', Bennett sought to cement the

⁵³² Bennett, *Pioneers in Protest* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1968).

⁵³³ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); "Churchmen Back 'Black Power'," *New York Amsterdam News*, 6 August 1966, 6; Dennis W. Wiley, "God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 80-83.

⁵³⁴ David Llorens, "Ameer (LeRoi Jones) Baraka," *Ebony*, August 1969, 75; Larry Neal, "Any Day Now: Black Art and Black Liberation," *Ebony*, August 1969, 54; Huey P. Newton, "The Black Panthers," *Ebony*, August 1969, 107; Alex Poinsett, "The Economics of Liberation," *Ebony*, August 1969, 150; James Turner, "Black Students and Their Changing Perspectives," *Ebony*, August 1969, 135.

continuity of Black Power across different historical periods. He contended that 'a *real* revolution introduces a new time and a new space and a new relation to both time and space.'⁵³⁵ Bennett endorsed a theory of both black revolution and black history that 'viewed the Black Rebellion as a self-propelling whole which advances and regresses by stages' and which moved toward or away from its underlying potential through an ongoing dialogue between activists in the past and the present.⁵³⁶ Through this notion, Bennett applied his understanding of black history as a living history to the black revolution as a social and political movement, arguing that the act of revolution enabled radical black pioneers to speak directly to each other across both space and time.⁵³⁷

'Of Time, Space and Revolution' was both an ideological and intellectual breakthrough for Bennett, offering *Ebony's* readers an integrated vision of Black Power, black history and black liberation previously unseen in the magazine's pages. It highlighted the extent to which Bennett's writing had, at least partially, transformed *Ebony* into a space for serious intellectual and philosophical discussion about the black experience. It presented a radical socialist vision of a structural realignment of American society centred on a grand democratic tradition and underpinned by the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, Raul Prebisch, Martin Luther King, Mao Tse-tung, Vladimir Lenin and W. E. B. Du Bois. This vision was applauded by the magazine's readers, who commended Bennett for providing an insight which reflected 'the new nationalist thinking.'⁵³⁸

One year later, in the magazine's 1970 special 'Which Way Black America?', Bennett developed this position further to advocate for 'liberation by

⁵³⁵ Bennett, "Of Time, Space and Revolution," 31.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵³⁸ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, October 1969, 14

any means necessary.⁵³⁹ He contended that the division between integration and separation by black activists revealed itself as a 'false choice' when viewed against the larger goal of true social transformation. Bennett argued that throughout black history, both separation and integration had been utilised as viable strategies for racial advancement. Yet attempts to pick between these two paths assumed, incorrectly, that black Americans were free to choose their position within the broader arc of history. Both integrationists and separatists, Bennett asserted, 'are trying to create right angles in a situation which only permits curves.'⁵⁴⁰ History, as the ultimate witness and analytical tool, testified that 'all movements for liberation in the black community, whether for integration or separation, have failed, and it asks why.' As such, the only question which mattered for black activists was the 'whether we are made of such stuff as histories are made of.'⁵⁴¹

The Challenge of Blackness

The radicalisation of Bennett's historical coverage was one of the most visible examples of the ways in which the Black Power movement had prompted Johnson and his editors 'to alter *Ebony's* traditional mission.'⁵⁴² Alongside other writers such as Peter Bailey and David Llorens, Bennett's writing had a major influence on *Ebony's* broader discussion of black culture, politics and theology, and underpinned special issues such as 'The Black Revolution.'⁵⁴³ Jeffrey Ogbar has positioned *Ebony's* 1969 special as one of the most important literary attempts to take a 'broad look at black resistance to

⁵³⁹ Bennett, "Liberation," 36.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁴² Brown, "Souled Out," 4.

⁵⁴³ Bennett, "The Rise of Black Power," *Ebony*, February 1969, 36-42; "Evolution of Afro-American Art, 1800-1950," *Ebony*, February 1968, 116-122; Llorens, "Black Separatism in Perspective," *Ebony*, September 1968, 88-95; Poinsett, "The Black Revolt in White Churches," *Ebony*, September 1968, 63-68.

racial subjugation from as early as the colonial era through to the urban unrest of the 1960s.⁵⁴⁴ Mike Sell has suggested that for an ostensibly centrist and popular black consumer magazine to produce such an issue spoke to 'the ways in which a theory and practise of cultural empowerment cultivated by a small, elite coalition of college-educated, radical, African American intellectuals struck a sympathetic chord with a relatively large segment of African American society.'⁵⁴⁵

From a different perspective, the evolution of Bennett's writing in *Ebony* highlighted how his understanding of the form and function of black history had been altered by his experiences outside of JPC. By the second half of the 1960s, Bennett had established himself within a myriad of black intellectual and political projects on both a local and national scale.⁵⁴⁶ He had become a sought after speaker and vaunted public intellectual.⁵⁴⁷ He would receive an honorary doctorate from Morehouse in 1966, and major institutions such as Boston University sought to establish collections of his papers and correspondence.⁵⁴⁸ Bennett helped to organise and participated in events such as the National Conference on Black Power in 1967 and the annual black writer's conference at Fisk University.⁵⁴⁹ He became increasingly critical of white news media, arguing

⁵⁴⁴ Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 241.

⁵⁴⁵ Mike Sell, "The Black Arts Movement: Performance, Neo-Orality, and the Deconstruction of the 'White Thing'," in *African-American Performance and Theater History: a Critical Reader*, ed. Harry J. Elam, Jr. and David Krasner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 57.

⁵⁴⁶ Black History Today and Yesterday, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Fenderson, "Toward a Black Aesthetic," 94, 105 and 109; Hear Lerone Bennett, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers; John Henrik Clarke to Lerone Bennett, 4 December 1967, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, 96-102.

⁵⁴⁷ Inter-office Communication, 10 February 1967, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; "Lerone Bennett to Lecture at ITC Monday," *Atlanta Daily World*, 22 February 1970, 7;

⁵⁴⁸ Doctor of Letters, 31 May 1966, Box 67, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Howard Gotlieb to Lerone Bennett, 4 August 1969, Box 5, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁵⁴⁹ John Lowney, *History, Memory and the Literary Left: Modern American Poetry, 1935-1968* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), 133; "Nat'l. Black Power Confab Next Week," *New York Amsterdam News*, 15 July 1967, 1; "On the Conference Beat," *Negro Digest*, July 1967, 90; "Plan Conclave," *New York Amsterdam News*, 24 June 1967, 10.

that many outlets fundamentally misrepresented the parameters of the black revolution, and were frequently the 'adversaries of Black Power.'⁵⁵⁰

Ebony's attempts to substantiate Bennett's position as a serious historian and black intellectual helped to pave the way for his formal entry into the academy. In 1968 the editor was invited to Northwestern as a visiting scholar.⁵⁵¹ Martha Biondi has contended that during his year as a visiting professor, Bennett's lectures proved wildly popular and helped to put him in a strong position for a prospective future role as a permanent professor and possible department chair. The clamour from Northwestern's students for the institution to appoint Bennett and C. L. R. James as visiting scholars 'shows their desire to inject a movement sensibility and critical edge to the forging of a Black Studies curriculum in Evanston.'⁵⁵² In turn, Bennett's time at Northwestern can be seen to have stimulated his engagement with black history in new ways, feeding into the beginning of a new black history series in 1969 titled 'The Making of Black America', and the publication of his seminal articles in *Ebony's* 1969 and 1970 special issues.⁵⁵³

Perhaps the most important influence on Bennett's writing during the late 1960s came from his role as part of the Institute of the Black World's early development. Following the Institute's creation in the aftermath of King's assassination, Bennett joined an influential group of black intellectuals which included Robert Hill, William Strickland, St. Clair Drake, Joyce Ladner, and Vincent Harding. The Institute channelled many of the pre-existing relationships

⁵⁵⁰ "Black Power Called a Response to Racism," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 May 1968, 2; Thomas Johnson, "Ebony Editor Sees Black Revolt as Challenge to the News Media," *New York Times*, 30 August 1969, 24.

⁵⁵¹ Bennett, "Passion: a Certain Dark Joy," *Ebony*, December 1968, 44.

⁵⁵² Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 94-95.

⁵⁵³ Bennett, "The First Generation," *Ebony*, June 1969, 31.

between figures such as Harding and Bennett into a formal think tank, which subsequently became a home for 'many of the nation's most stellar Black radical intellectuals.'⁵⁵⁴

Rooted in the belief that black liberation was both a political and intellectual project, the Institute attempted to develop a critique of racial relations that was directed by the combination of 'a black nationalist perspective with an American pragmatism.'⁵⁵⁵ Harding conceived the Institute as a space within which 'the work of Du Bois could find a renaissance.'⁵⁵⁶ Similarly, just as Bennett's role at the Institute fed back into his historical treatise for *Ebony*, so too did the magazine promote the Institute's work through documenting its development.⁵⁵⁷ Derrick White has noted that an important part of the Institute's promotional strategy was to secure articles in Johnson publications such as *Ebony* and *Negro Digest/Black World*.⁵⁵⁸ Harding himself had contributed an article to *Ebony*'s 1969 special titled 'Black Students and the Impossible Revolution', which assessed the impact of Black Power on the development of the black campus movement.⁵⁵⁹

Three months after the publication of 'The Black Revolution' in August 1969, Bennett delivered the keynote speech at the Institute's inaugural Black Studies Conference, titled 'The Challenge of Blackness'.⁵⁶⁰ James Turner would later stress the meeting's significance as 'the founding convention for the field'

⁵⁵⁴ Clarence Lusane, *African Americans at the Crossroads: the Restructuring of Black Leadership and the 1992 Elections* (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 200.

⁵⁵⁵ White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, xiv

⁵⁵⁶ Marable, "Black Studies and the Racial Mountain," in *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, ed. Manning Marable (Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2000), 20.

⁵⁵⁷ Harding, "Black Students and the 'Impossible' Revolution," *Ebony*, September 1969, 97-104; Poinsett, "Think Tank For Black Scholars," *Ebony*, February 1970, 47; "Toward the Black University," *Ebony*, August 1970, 156; White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 20.

⁵⁵⁸ White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 6.

⁵⁵⁹ Harding, "Black Students and the Impossible Revolution," 141.

⁵⁶⁰ White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 20.

that would come to be known interchangeably as Africana Studies or Black Studies.⁵⁶¹ Harding described Bennett's address as a 'personal distillation and clarification...of the collective experiences of the staff of the Institute', and following his address Sterling Stuckey would position Bennett alongside Harding as one of the Institute's 'twin threats.'⁵⁶² Bennett's speech would be adapted into publication as the Institute's first 'Black Paper' in 1970, which John McClendon would go on to position as one of 'the seminal essays on the philosophy of Blackness' to emerge out of the Black Power era.⁵⁶³

It would also form the basis for *The Challenge of Blackness*, which upon its publication in 1972 became Bennett's seventh book in a decade to be published through the Johnson Book Division. This diverse collection of essays was drawn from writing published through *Ebony* and independently, alongside papers and speeches Bennett had to organisations such as the Institute of the Black World and the National Urban League. It stood as a testament to Bennett's influence within an intricate and expansive web of black political, intellectual and historical projects during the late 1960s and early 1970s. He argued that the disparate articles and speeches collected in the book were held together by 'a common concern with the challenge of blackness as expressed most concretely in the thrust of black people for political, economic, and cultural power.'⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶¹ Turner, "Africana Studies and Epistemology: a Discourse in the Sociology of Knowledge," in *Africana Studies: a Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*, ed. James L. Conyers (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1997), 92.

⁵⁶² *The Challenge of Blackness*, 1970, Box 2, Lerone Bennett Papers; Institute of the Black World Memo, 8 December 1969, Box 2, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁵⁶³ John H. McClendon, "Act Your Age and Not Your Color: Blackness as Material Conditions, Presumptive Context, and Social Category," in *White on White/Black on Black*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 281.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

Furthermore, *The Challenge of Blackness* demonstrated the extent to which Bennett had moved away from his earlier deference to notions of historical objectivity in his first black history series, and had increasingly sought to 'develop a new frame of reference, which transcends the limits of white concepts.'⁵⁶⁵ In contrast to his willingness to cite white historians and social scientists during the early 1960s, Bennett contended that he was 'tired of white people studying the black community.'⁵⁶⁶ Echoing the rhetoric of cultural nationalists such as Maulana Karenga, Bennett asserted that 'blacks must be educated from the center of themselves', and that this ambition must underpin the recovery and reframing of black history.⁵⁶⁷ Such statements have led Sandra Van Dyk to position *The Challenge of Blackness* as 'an important, though usually unrecognized precursor' to the formal theory of Afrocentricity.'⁵⁶⁸

Black History/Black Power

Bennett's movement between a range of different institutions and intellectual circles during the Black Power era served to highlight the artificial and frequently limiting boundaries established between 'professional' black historians and 'social historians.' Regardless of claims to transcultural or historical objectivity, black historians have long understood that their scholarship and methodology is 'deeply implicated in the system of white supremacy' which underpins American life.⁵⁶⁹ These divisions appeared to become increasingly arbitrary as black historiography moved to the left during the Black Power era. Indeed, by the late 1960s black historians such as Joel

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 208.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 39-41.

⁵⁶⁸ Sandra Van Dyk, "What Is Afrocentric? Applying Afrocentric Analysis to a Non-Fiction Text," in *Afrocentricity and the Academy: Essays on Theory and Practise*, ed. James L. Conyers (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), 179.

⁵⁶⁹ John Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 3.

Augustus Rogers, who had earlier been dismissed as 'outsider' historians, were now viewed as a respectable alternatives to the agitprop of Black Power intellectuals.⁵⁷⁰

Bennett's rise to the forefront of black literary nationalism also underscored the ambiguous relationship between *Ebony* and radical black activists, and the duality of both his own and the magazine's role. Amiri Baraka viciously attacked elements of *Ebony*'s content in letters to Johnson, but received favourable write-ups by editors such as Alex Poinsett.⁵⁷¹ Just a few months after the publication of *Ebony*'s 1969 special on 'The Black Revolution', poet Don Lee picketed the JPC headquarters on charges that the magazine had failed to 'convey any useful information necessary to the intellectual development or functioning of black people in their struggle for liberation.'⁵⁷² However, Lee did not appear to take issue with complementary articles such as 'Black Don Lee' which appeared in March 1969 and which substantially raised his national profile.⁵⁷³ Many of the same activists who attacked *Ebony* for celebrating the 'anti-intellectual core of black bourgeois ostentatiousness' also applauded Bennett's role within the Black Power and Black Arts movements – a role which was facilitated through his contributions to *Ebony*.⁵⁷⁴

These tensions were not limited to *Ebony*'s external critics, but also manifested themselves internally. The role of editors such as Peter Bailey demonstrated that divisions between little black magazines and black consumer

⁵⁷⁰ Turner, "Joel August Rogers," 35; Van Deburg, *Modern Black Nationalism*, 64.

⁵⁷¹ Amiri Baraka to Eunice Johnson cc. John H. Johnson, 7 March 1973, Box 15, Hoyt Fuller Papers; Poinsett, "Black Takeover of U.S. Cities?," *Ebony*, November 1970, 77; Poinsett, "It's Nation Time!," *Ebony*, December 1970, 98.

⁵⁷² "Ebony Chief to Review Policies," *Chicago Daily News*, 2 January 1970, Box 15, Hoyt Fuller Papers; "Ebony hit for lack of militancy," *Washington Post*, 31 December 1969, A2.

⁵⁷³ "Backstage," *Ebony*, February 1969, 25; Llorens, "Black Don Lee," *Ebony*, March 1969, 72.

⁵⁷⁴ Jerry Gafio Watts, *Amiri Baraka: the Politics and Art of a Black Intellectual* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 214.

periodicals were a false dichotomy – Bailey had helped Malcolm X to create the Organization of Afro-American Unity and had edited its newsletter the *Blacklash*, but ‘paid his bills’ working in the New York offices of JPC.⁵⁷⁵ More broadly, a core leftist group within *Ebony*’s editorial team looked to critique its pro-capitalist position as the sixties progressed.⁵⁷⁶ Yet for editors such as John Woodford, *Ebony*’s shift to the left was not radical enough. In an open letter outlining his decision to resign in order to take up a position at the Nation of Islam’s newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* in 1968, Woodford attacked *Ebony* for failing to support the jailed Huey P. Newton, for failing to support Castro’s Cuba, and ‘for countless other reasons which, all in all, I take as insults to the Afro American community and myself.’⁵⁷⁷

Such internecine squabbles were frequently exacerbated by the magazine’s advertisers. For example, both moderate and militant black activists turned against American military power and the conflict in Vietnam during the second half of the 1960s.⁵⁷⁸ *Ebony*’s early engagement with the conflict suggested that American forces were ‘notably free of the more obnoxious racial inequities that have characterized America’s past wars.’⁵⁷⁹ However, the magazine’s 1968 special on ‘The Black Soldier’ offered a more ambivalent description of the experience of black servicemen in Vietnam, and by the end of the decade both *Ebony*’s editorial coverage and letters from readers had moved

⁵⁷⁵ Brown, “Souled Out,” 116; Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (London; Penguin, 2011), 383; William W. Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 114-115.

⁵⁷⁶ Fenderson, “Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic,” 49.

⁵⁷⁷ John Woodford to JPC, Box 15, Hoyt Fuller Papers; Robert E. Weems with Lewis A. Randolph, *Business in Black and White: American Presidents and Black Entrepreneurs in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 135-136.

⁵⁷⁸ Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements of the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 1-2.

⁵⁷⁹ Booker, “Negroes in Vietnam: ‘We too, are American’,” *Ebony*, November 1965, 99.

towards an anti-war position.⁵⁸⁰ By contrast, Corey Bowers has noted that *Ebony's* pages saw a significant rise in military advertisements during this same period, which were explicitly designed to 'entice young black men and women into enlisting.'⁵⁸¹

Against such tensions, black history become a key method of treading a tight-rope between the attitudes of *Ebony's* editors, readers and advertisers, and expectations and demands of the broader black activist community. If, as Bennett argued, black history could serve to close the spaces between 'time, space and revolution', then it could also help to reconcile the spaces between different philosophies and strategies for black advancement. The success of Black Power was contingent on a recognition of common interest, and grounded in black people 'taking care of their own.' In the pursuit of this goal, black history provided 'the scaffold upon which personal and group identities are constructed.'⁵⁸² As a result, Bennett argued that black history and Black Power were interchangeable, because history was power – 'it orders and organizes our world and valorizes our projects...it is not only a record of action, it is action itself.'⁵⁸³

Of all the factors which allowed Bennett to push against the parameters of *Ebony's* editorial coverage, perhaps the most significant was his close relationship to Johnson. This was a mutually beneficial partnership that was based on a deep personal and professional respect – Johnson had introduced Bennett to his wife Gloria during the mid-1950s, and Bennett would go on to co-

⁵⁸⁰ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, January 1970, 154; Llorens, "Why Negroes Re-enlist," *Ebony*, August 1968, 87; Ponchitta Pierce and Peter Bailey, "The Returning Vet," *Ebony*, August 1968, 145;

⁵⁸¹ Brown, "Souled Out," 156-158.

⁵⁸² Bennett, "Liberation," 40.

⁵⁸³ Bennett, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 194.

author Johnson's memoirs.⁵⁸⁴ Whereas Jonathan Fenderson has noted that Fuller and Johnson clashed over politics, business protocols and management issues, Bennett's papers provide scant evidence of personal rancour between *Ebony's* publisher and senior editor.⁵⁸⁵ The independence granted to Bennett within *Ebony* can also be connected to Johnson's awareness of history's power as a unifying rhetorical and editorial device. Accordingly, *The Challenge of Blackness* would be celebrated by *Ebony* for offering 'radical alternatives and strategies for the black community,' and Bennett himself would be championed as an editor who 'stands out above all others', based on his position as a 'noted expert in black history.'⁵⁸⁶

However, Bennett's role as *Ebony's* historian also served to both mediate and limit his radical potential. This sense of limitation was reflected by the sentiments of Charles Sanders, who penned a telling memo to Bennett in 1971. Whilst Sanders declared that 'nobody has done as much for *Ebony* – in helping to turn it around and making it at least appear to be a progressive publication in certain areas', he implored Bennett to use his close standing with Johnson to push for 'truly significant analyses of the black condition' akin to those he had offered through addresses for the Institute of the Black World.⁵⁸⁷ Sanders' memo highlighted the underlying tension of Bennett's role at *Ebony*. Bennett's position at JPC, and the contacts available through the company's extensive networks, provided a gateway into more radical literary and intellectual projects. Yet journalists such as Cleve Washington have also noted that the gravitas

⁵⁸⁴ A Celebration of the Life of Gloria Sylvester Bennett, Box 36, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*.

⁵⁸⁵ That is not to say that such tensions were not there, merely that I have found no evidence of them through my archival research or through interviews with Johnson Publishing staff and members of Bennett's family. Fenderson, "Toward a Black Aesthetic," 44-45.

⁵⁸⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, March 1975, 22; "Recommended for Black History." *Ebony*, April 1973, 150.

⁵⁸⁷ Charles Sanders to Lerone Bennett, 1971, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

Ebony provided had 'inherent limitations as a medium for the presentation of black history.'⁵⁸⁸ Although *Ebony* had effectively sponsored the evolution of Bennett's historical philosophy, his ability to project this evolution back onto the magazine's readership was mediated by its 'basic commercial thrust', and the demands and expectations of its diverse readership.⁵⁸⁹

On a more practical level, by the early 1970s Bennett had little to gain, and a great deal to lose, by taking Sanders' advice. His role at *Ebony* was stable, financially rewarding, and increasingly self-determined. The limitations of working outside of this environment were crystallised by Bennett's short-lived role as the Chairman of the newly created Afro-American Studies Department at Northwestern in 1972. As just about 'the most qualified man in the country for the position', Bennett's appointment was greeted enthusiastically by staff and students.⁵⁹⁰ However, he quickly became embroiled in academic politics, and in particular a dispute over faculty hiring policies.⁵⁹¹ Declaring that he was 'not prepared to take orders on the interpretation of the Black experience', Bennett resigned just months after accepting the role.⁵⁹² Despite the pleas of students to reconsider his decision, Bennett retreated to JPC – a preferable if imperfect vehicle from which to critique the challenge of blackness.⁵⁹³

Conclusion

Just as Bennett had used black history to contextualise shifts in the pattern and function of black activism during the first half of the 1960s, so too

⁵⁸⁸ Washington, "Lerone Bennett Jr.," Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, April 1972, 28; Gene Donner to Lerone Bennett, 3 March 1972, Box 18, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Richard Leopold to Lerone Bennett, 2 March 1972, Box 18, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; University News, 1 March 1972, Box 18, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁵⁹¹ "Bennett Leaves NU Post," *Chicago Daily Defender*, 30 November 1972, 3.

⁵⁹² Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 98-100.

⁵⁹³ Eric Wilson et al., to Lerone Bennett, 1971, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Northwestern University Students to Lerone Bennett, 17 November 1972, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

did the form and function of black history become a critical tool for *Ebony* to engage with Black Power during the second half of the decade. Through historical series such as 'Black Power' and articles such as 'Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?' Bennett demonstrated how his understanding of black history had shifted alongside the radicalisation of black activism during the 1960s. As the figurehead for the editorial left wing of JPC, Bennett's coverage of black history helped to push a progressive, and frequently radical, editorial agenda. Furthermore, his rise to the forefront of the black cultural and literary expression demonstrated the value Black Power activists placed on history for the 'psychological and cultural empowerment and liberation' of black people.⁵⁹⁴

The evolution of Bennett's historical coverage in *Ebony* did not save the magazine from criticism, and the magazine continued to be attacked by activists and readers from varying positions on the ideological spectrum. Indeed, the diverse response of readers to articles such as 'Was Abe Lincoln A White Supremacist?' highlighted the almost impossible task faced by *Ebony* of adapting its content to engage with radicalising black activism while maintaining its primary role of being a centrist consumer magazine. From this perspective, *Ebony's* coverage of black history became an important overarching theme which served to connect its editors and audience. However, this role came at a cost. As we shall see in the following chapter, while Bennett argued that black history was imbued with a liberatory potential, his depiction of the past also served to reify the black man and to enforce a conservative vision of black gender and sexuality.

⁵⁹⁴ Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 31.

CHAPTER 4:

These Black Men Helped Change The World: Gender, Sexuality and Black History in *Ebony* Magazine

Focusing on the magazine's content during the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter explores how *Ebony* both pushed back against and reinforced what critics have described as the masculinisation of black history.⁵⁹⁵ Through its coverage of the black past, *Ebony* helped to uncover a rich, and frequently radical, history of black female activism and achievement. The magazine's depiction of figures such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth positioned them as militant leaders and pioneering black feminists.⁵⁹⁶ Yet its coverage of black history also carried a clear bias toward the ambitions and achievements of black men – a position which was grounded in the personal biases of its editorial team, and consolidated by gendered patterns of historical production and black leadership during the 1960s.⁵⁹⁷

We can also see how a desire to present black people as 'decent and moral historical agents' fed into the production of a heterosexist black history in *Ebony*.⁵⁹⁸ Through his celebration of a 'founding' black family, Bennett provided a rebuttal to the image of a 'pathological' black family and the implicit connection between black emasculation, homosexuality, and the breakdown of the black family made by the Moynihan Report in 1965.⁵⁹⁹ However, he also

⁵⁹⁵ Pochmara, *The Making of the New Negro*, 10.

⁵⁹⁶ Bennett, "Pioneers in Protest Part 9," *Ebony*, November 1964, 148.

⁵⁹⁷ Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, "Introduction," in *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-9; Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 111-115.

⁵⁹⁸ Mattie Udora Richardson, "No More Secrets, No More Lies: African American History and Compulsory Homosexuality," *Journal of Women's History* 15 (2006): 63-64.

⁵⁹⁹ Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights: the Moynihan Report and its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 119-122; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Negro Family:

contributed to *Ebony's* problematic engagement with nonheteronormative black identities, and arguably silenced the historical experience of blacks who did not fit within acceptable boundaries of black sexuality and desire. The magazine's assumption of 'compulsory heterosexuality' throughout history reinforced the ways in which queer black identities presented a 'threat' to the black family, masculinity and respectability.⁶⁰⁰ As a result, *Ebony's* coverage of black history complemented efforts to legitimate black citizenship which were 'constructed upon heterosexuality and in opposition to nonheteronormative behaviour.'⁶⁰¹

Mays, Morehouse and the Masculinisation of Black History

Critics such as Catherine Squires have identified an inherent tension in the role of institutions such as the black press in the development of the black public sphere.⁶⁰² On the one hand, black periodicals have historically formed a key site for the development of a black nationalist consciousness and the promotion of shared group concerns and interests.⁶⁰³ Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries black newspapers championed the common cause and looked to service the 'special needs of a militantly struggling people.'⁶⁰⁴ Yet on the other hand, black publications were often directed by a predominantly male cohort of elite black activists and intellectuals, who defined

the Case for National Action," United States Department of Labor, March 1965, <http://www.blackpast.org/primary/moynihan-report-1965>; Kevin J. Mumford, "Untangling Pathology: the Moynihan Report and Homosexual Damage, 1965-1975," *Journal of Policy History* 24 (2012): 53-73.

⁶⁰⁰ Dagbovie, *What is African American History?* (Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 134-135.

⁶⁰¹ Thaddeus Russell, "The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality," *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 103.

⁶⁰² Squires, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 454.

⁶⁰³ Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation*, 87.

⁶⁰⁴ Pride and Wilson, *A History of the Black Press*, 14; Thomas Sugrue, "Hilburn, Hattiesburg, and Hitler: Wartime Activists Think Globally and Act Locally," in *Fog of War: the Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 90.

prospective routes to racial emancipation in specifically classed, sexed and gendered ways.⁶⁰⁵

Such tensions fed into broader debates into racial uplift and respectability, which have often been directed by a 'profound anxiety about the status specifically of African American *masculinity*.'⁶⁰⁶ Elsa Barkley Brown has noted that the interwoven tenets of racial uplift and black nationalist thought have promoted an ideology of blackness which equated 'the status, condition, and progress of the race – the good of the race – with men. It is a masculinization of Blackness and race progress.'⁶⁰⁷ From a historical perspective, the desire to recover (predominantly male) heroes from a 'previously buried racial past' was a key way for the 'New Negroes' of the Harlem Renaissance to express their own liberation.⁶⁰⁸

Caught between the need to engage in 'heroic warfare' with predecessors, and the desire to validate black male authorship through a celebration of their forefathers, black male writers and historians of the Harlem Renaissance contributed to the construction of a 'patrilineal black history.'⁶⁰⁹ In turn, the tenets of racial uplift and black nationalist thought which underpinned the birth of the early black history movement engendered particular ways of thinking about black history, which fed into the 'erasure of women from contemporary assessments of the black condition and from black political

⁶⁰⁵ Asante, *The African American People*, 146-147; Robert Jefferson Norrell, *Up From History: the Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009), 317-320; Kim Gallon, "Silences Kept: the Absence of Gender and Sexuality in Black Press Historiography," *History Compass* 10 (2012): 207-218.

⁶⁰⁶ Philip Brian Harper, *Are We Not Men?*, preface.

⁶⁰⁷ Elsa Barkley Brown, "Imagining Lynching: African American Women, Communities of Struggle, and Collective Memory," in *African American Women Speak Out on Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas*, ed. Geneva Smitherman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 114.

⁶⁰⁸ Van Deburg, *Modern Black Nationalism*, 64.

⁶⁰⁹ Pochmara, *The Making of the New Negro*, 9-10.

struggle.⁶¹⁰ This was compounded by discussions of black historical and literary genius during the first half of the twentieth century, which, through works such as Benjamin Mays' *The Negro's God, as Reflected in his Literature*, were frequently directed by and toward the black male.⁶¹¹ As the talismanic president of Morehouse College from 1940 to 1967, Mays played a critical role in the intellectual and philosophical development of a whole generation of 'Morehouse Men', including Lerone Bennett and Martin Luther King.⁶¹²

Mays' belief in the ability of blacks to 'transform the world through prophetic witness and church-centred activism' had a major impact on many of his students.⁶¹³ More broadly, Mays' understanding of the relationship between black masculinity, spirituality and radical black consciousness would leave its mark on black historians and activists of the Black Power era.⁶¹⁴ Like many other black men of his generation, Mays' sense of communal pride and political struggle was rooted in an adherence to a 'masculine version of Protestant Christianity' cultivated within the southern black Baptist tradition.⁶¹⁵ As Mays would later recall in his autobiography, his public image as a 'race man' was centred on a defence of black masculinity against the perils of white supremacy,

⁶¹⁰ Brown, "Imagining Lynching," 114.

⁶¹¹ Benjamin Mays, *The Negro's God, as Reflected in his literature* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1938).

⁶¹² "Benjamin Mays, the Morehouse Legend," *Ebony, Jr!*, August 1983, 18.

⁶¹³ Lewis V. Baldwin, *The Voice of Conscience: the Church in the Mind of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 37-38.

⁶¹⁴ Mark L. Chapman, *Christianity on Trial: African American Religious Thought Before and After Black Power* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 6; Randal Maurice Jelks, *Benjamin Elijah Mays, Schoolmaster of the Movement: a Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 45.

⁶¹⁵ Baldwin, *The Voice of Conscience*, 38; Jelks, *Benjamin Elijah Mays*, 45; Glenn Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 176

and the role of black manhood in shaping black identity, protest and resistance.⁶¹⁶

This same anxiety over the state of black masculinity underpinned Mays' decision to accept the presidency of Morehouse in 1940, the nation's only all-male historically black college. Facing a financial crisis and flagging student enrolment, Mays 'refused to abandon the noble task of educating black men for service to the nation and the world.'⁶¹⁷ That is not to say that Mays failed to interrogate gender inequality within black activism or to offer solidarity with black women. Indeed, Beverly Guy-Sheftall has positioned Mays alongside Douglass and Du Bois as a feminist forefather whose 'progressive writing about gender and the oppression of black women are a significant, if invisible, aspect of black political discourse.'⁶¹⁸ However, the 'Morehouse Men' formed during the Mays era can be collectively viewed as 'antiracist patriarchs' who became powerful agents against the hegemony of white supremacy, 'even if they were still ensnared...by its gendered protocols.'⁶¹⁹

It was within this atmosphere that Bennett's understanding of black history, masculinity, and protest was developed during the late 1940s.⁶²⁰ The editor would later recall that his decision to attend the institution had been strongly influenced by encounters with 'Morehouse Men' during his childhood in Jackson. He declared that 'I was very impressed with them simply because of the way they responded as men to an intolerable racial situation. They carried

⁶¹⁶ Mays, "In the Days of My Youth," in *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Rudolph P. Byrd and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 93.

⁶¹⁷ Eboni Marshall Turman, *Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 121.

⁶¹⁸ Guy-Sheftall, "Remembering Our Feminist Forefathers," in *Progressive Black Masculinities*, ed. Athena D. Mutua (New York: Routledge, 2006), 46.

⁶¹⁹ Peter Heltzel, *Resurrection City: a Theology of Improvisation* (Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 119.

⁶²⁰ Morehouse Yearbook 1949, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

themselves as men. They acted like men.’⁶²¹ From a similar perspective, his relationship to Mays was grounded on his deference to the educator’s role as a ‘race man.’⁶²² Bennett would go on to eulogise Mays as ‘a lean, beautifully-black preacher prophet’, whose years at Morehouse offered a ‘ministry of manhood’ to his pupils.⁶²³ Two months before the beginning of his first black history series in 1961, Bennett aligned the institution’s growth with the uplift of the race, arguing that ‘the story of its transformation from a grammar school into a first-rate liberal arts college is the story of the increasing emancipation of the Negro male.’⁶²⁴

Black History as a Double Edged Sword

Bennett’s contributions to *Ebony* during the 1960s and 1970s provided a complex depiction of the relationship between gender, black history and the struggle for racial equality. His articles frequently looked to recover the impact of individual black women during slavery and freedom. Expansive features such as ‘The Negro Woman’ and ‘No Crystal Stair’ highlighted the unique burdens placed on black women throughout history, and celebrated their ability to have ‘climbed so high against such formidable odds.’⁶²⁵ Yet through the rhetorical and textual balance of his writing, Bennett continued and reinforced a patrilineal black history. This can be seen through the composition of his ‘Negro History’ series in the early 1960s. Bennett was quick to note that many of the ‘bad negroes’ of slavery folklore – the ‘proud and defiant rebels who could be broken’

⁶²¹ “The Turning Point That Changed Their Lives,” *Ebony*, January 1979, 75.

⁶²² Clarence Taylor, *Black Religious Intellectuals: the Fight for Equality from Jim Crow to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 55.

⁶²³ Bennett, “Benjamin Elijah Mays,” 72.

⁶²⁴ Bennett, “Men of Morehouse,” *Ebony*, May 1961, 26.

⁶²⁵ Bennett, “The Negro Woman,” 86; Bennett, “No Crystal Stair: the Black Woman in History,” *Ebony*, August 1977, 164-170.

– were women.⁶²⁶ He championed the powerful rhetoric and international influence of Phillis Wheatley and other black female writers and activists.⁶²⁷ However, the named and unnamed accounts of black rebellion and resistance he offered were predominantly embodied by black men like Crispus Attucks, Denmark Vesey, Miles James, Nat Turner, and Prince Hall.⁶²⁸

As Daryl Michael Scott has noted, Bennett's work can be situated within a body of literature by 'Black Power historians' who understood black history to be primarily a 'motivational tool or as a means to counter grievances.'⁶²⁹ Through his hyperbolic and religiously infused depiction of figures such as Attucks and Turner, Bennett offered a triumphant portrayal of black resistance – yet this approach also had clear limitations. For example, Wilson Jeremiah Moses has suggested that Bennett's writing helped to foster a 'misty legend of "black Crispus Attucks"' which offered a reductive image of the disparate thoughts and actions of black Bostonians during the Revolutionary period.⁶³⁰ More broadly, Bennett's work displayed a somewhat uneven engagement with 'historical knowledge as part of an enquiry aimed at understanding institutions and processes on their own terms.'⁶³¹

As his first black history series demonstrated, Bennett showed a keen awareness of white supremacy not simply as an act of individual extremism but as an ideology which underpinned the foundations of American democracy. Similarly, articles such as 'The Mood of the Negro' illustrated a clear critique of

⁶²⁶ Bennett, "Behind the Cotton Curtain," 90.

⁶²⁷ Bennett, "The Negro in the America Revolution," 98.

⁶²⁸ Bennett, "The Negro in the Civil War," 134; Bennett, "Slave Revolts and Insurrections," 85-86.

⁶²⁹ Scott, "Following in the Footsteps of John Hope Franklin," 40.

⁶³⁰ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), xiii.

⁶³¹ Scott, "Following in the Footsteps of John Hope Franklin," 40.

class tensions within the black freedom struggle.⁶³² Yet his writing often reinforced gendered historical institutions and processes. He contended that the emancipation of 4 million slaves came about 'because millions of men made choices, acted and were called upon finally to back up their acts. It came about because men said words, wrote them and were called upon finally to back up their words.'⁶³³ The primacy of black men in the struggle for equality was embodied in the image of Frederick Douglass as the 'father of the protest movement' on the cover of the 1963 Emancipation Proclamation special, or the anonymous male face which fronted 'The Mood of the Negro.'⁶³⁴

This tension between the subversion and reinforcement of a patrilineal black history was maintained through his second black history series 'Pioneers in Protest.' Bennett's series included powerful articles on Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, which placed them at the centre of the struggle for black equality.⁶³⁵ By positioning Truth as a major leader in nineteenth century abolitionist and feminist movements, it can be argued that Bennett presented a re-evaluation of Truth's life through the lens of what Tamari Kitossa has described as an 'African-centred feminist historiography.'⁶³⁶ He offered a triumphant portrayal of Truth's impact at the second annual convention of the women's suffrage movement in 1851 in Akron, Ohio, where she articulated her iconic refrain – 'Ar'n't I a woman?' – that would become a familiar cry in the

⁶³² Bennett, "The Mood of the Negro," 27-28.

⁶³³ Bennett, "Generation of Crisis," 82.

⁶³⁴ Sundquist, "From Antislavery to Civil Rights," 417.

⁶³⁵ Bennett, "Pioneers in Protest Part 8," 63.

⁶³⁶ Tamari Kitossa, "Criticism, Reconstruction and African-Centred Feminist Historiography," in *Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms*, ed. Njoki Nathani Wane, Katerina Deliovsky and Erica Lawson (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2002), 91.

women's rights movement.⁶³⁷ Bennett championed Truth's recognition of the intersectionality of sexism, racism and class oppression with 'one of the most brilliant improvisational thrusts in the history of American oratory.'⁶³⁸

From a different perspective, Bennett's profile offered a progressive vision of black womanhood which contrasted with the light-skinned celebrities and models that continued to populate *Ebony's* cover during the first half of the 1960s.⁶³⁹ He opened his profile of Truth with the assertion that 'she was plain, she was aging, she was black.'⁶⁴⁰ This message was reiterated in his profile of Tubman, where he declared her to be 'black as the night, and as bold.' Bennett offered an explicitly militant image of Tubman as 'the great slave rebel, whose name struck terror in the hearts of Eastern Shore planters.'⁶⁴¹ His description of Tubman leading runaways through the night with her 'revolver cocked' was reinforced by artistic renderings of the abolitionist leaning on a rifle. However, these profiles sat against the gendered framework of the series as a whole. Across twelve different articles, Truth and Tubman were the only women profiled by Bennett, compared to thirteen men. This discrepancy was widened in the transition to book form, where the number of men profiled rose to eighteen.⁶⁴²

This masculinisation of black history was consolidated and expanded through Bennett's 'Black Power' series during the second half of the 1960s. The rise of black political power during Reconstruction manifested itself in

⁶³⁷ Bennett incorrectly gave the date of the Akron speech as 1852. Carleton Mabree with Susan Mabree Newhouse, *Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 67.

⁶³⁸ Bennett, "Pioneers in Protest Part 8," 69.

⁶³⁹ *Ebony*, March 1962; *Ebony*, July 1962, 4; *Ebony*, June 1962, *Ebony*, January 1963, *Ebony*, January 1964; *Ebony*, February 1964.

⁶⁴⁰ Bennett, "Pioneers in Protest Part 8," 63.

⁶⁴¹ Bennett, "Pioneer in Protest Part 9," 148-149.

⁶⁴² Bennett, *Pioneers in Protest* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1968), 1.

exclusively masculine terms, in locations such as at the South Carolina statehouse where '76 black men and 48 white men were gathering to make laws for South Carolina's black majority and its white minority.'⁶⁴³ Black women were caught up in this turmoil and the resultant white backlash, with Bennett praising black women who 'banded together and refused to associate with husbands or boyfriends who abandoned the Republican cause.'⁶⁴⁴ However, their actions were seen as secondary to the struggles of black male activists and politicians.

Perhaps the clearest example of this trend in Bennett's writing about black history came through his expansive series 'The Making of Black America.' Beginning in June 1969 and running until February 1974, this series promised to take a 'close look at the history of the black man in America.'⁶⁴⁵ A central theme of the series was its celebration of the nation's 'black founding fathers.' Bennett championed the achievements of activists and businessmen such as Richard Allen, Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm in creating the first major black institutions in America, including the Free African Society, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the black press.⁶⁴⁶ While Bennett noted that 'at least twenty-six men and women can be identified as pioneers in the founding of black institutions', he referred to this mixed gender group collectively as the 'fathers of black America.'⁶⁴⁷

These biases in *Ebony's* historical coverage were not limited to Bennett's writing. Indeed, when compared to the contributions of other writers such as A.

⁶⁴³ Bennett, "Black Power Part I," 29.

⁶⁴⁴ Bennett, "The First White Backlash," 156.

⁶⁴⁵ Bennett, "The First Generation," *Ebony*, June 1969, 31; Bennett, "Money, Merchants, Markets Part III," *Ebony*, February 1974, 66.

⁶⁴⁶ Bennett, "The Black Pioneer Period," 54.

⁶⁴⁷ Bennett, "The Black Pioneer Period Continued," *Ebony*, November 1970, 56.

S. Young, Bennett's historical coverage of black woman appeared decidedly more progressive. Between November 1968 and April 1971 Young published 'The Black Athlete in the Golden Age of Sports', a 13 part series on black athletes in the years since 1945.⁶⁴⁸ In his book *Negro Firsts in Sports* - which was one of the first titles published by the Johnson Book Division – Young had included profiles of black sports-stars Althea Gibson and Wilma Rudolph.⁶⁴⁹ However, female athletes were completely excluded from his 'Golden Age of Sports' series, with attention only given to the 'girls' of prominent male athletes such as Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby.⁶⁵⁰

Editorial and Organisational Hierarchies of Gender

Such gendered biases in the magazine's coverage of black history mirrored similar tensions within *Ebony's* editorial team. From one perspective, *Ebony* and JPC provided a vital space for pioneering black female editors and journalists to develop their craft during the post-World War II years. One of the company's most prominent female editors during its first few decades was Era Bell Thompson, whose influence at *Ebony* during the late 1940s and 1950s rivalled that of Burns and Johnson. Following her appointment as the magazine's first international editor in 1964 Thompson was entrusted with the development of *Ebony Africa*, the magazine's first 'really large international project.'⁶⁵¹ Through her work as a foreign correspondent, she would help to redefine the role of black female journalists.⁶⁵² In response to Thompson's decision to enter semi-retirement at the end of the sixties, Johnson professed

⁶⁴⁸ Young, "The Black Athlete in the Golden Age of Sports," *Ebony*, November 1968, 152.

⁶⁴⁹ Young, *Negro Firsts in Sports* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1963).

⁶⁵⁰ Young, "Jackie Opens the Door – Wide!," *Ebony*, December 1968, 128-130; Young, "A Black Man in the Wigwam," *Ebony*, February 1969, 70-71.

⁶⁵¹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, February 1964, 23.

⁶⁵² Broussard, *African American Foreign Correspondents*, 126-132; Gerald G. Newborg, "Era Bell Thompson," in *African American Lives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 810-811.

that 'I have made quite a few decisions of which I am rather proud, but I don't think I've made any that I value more than the one I made to engage your services as a writer and editor.'⁶⁵³

However, scholars have also recognised that Thompson routinely faced 'Jane Crow politics' within *Ebony's* editorial team and the broader parameters of black publishing.⁶⁵⁴ Her frustrations at a perceived lack of respect compared to her male colleagues led to repeated threats to leave the magazine during the 1950s.⁶⁵⁵ From a different perspective, while her move to a position as international editor during the 1960s offered her greater journalistic freedom, it arguably marked a shift away from the centre of *Ebony's* editorial direction – as evidenced in her move from the top of the magazine's masthead as managing editor to the bottom as international editor.⁶⁵⁶ Similarly, while editors such as Gerri Major and Ponchitta Pierce would go on to take control of the magazine's offices in Paris and New York respectively, they did not trouble the core editorial hierarchy of the magazine dominated by Johnson, Bennett, Hans J. Massaquoi and Herbert Nipson, which endured into the 1980s.⁶⁵⁷

These editorial imbalances must be measured against the broader challenges faced by female writers and editors in an industry renowned for being 'among the most cutthroat and sexist' in the nation.⁶⁵⁸ The opportunities *Ebony* and other Johnson publications afforded to female journalists contrasted with the turmoil that hit publications such as *Newsweek* in the early 1970s as

⁶⁵³ John Johnson to Era Bell Thompson, 4 August 1969, Box 1, Era Bell Thompson Papers.

⁶⁵⁴ Hardison, *Writing Through Jane Crow*, 174-180.

⁶⁵⁵ Era Bell Thompson to John H. Johnson, 18 February 1952, Box 1, Era Bell Thompson Papers; Era Bell Thompson to John Johnson, 26 June 1959, Era Bell Thompson Papers; Eileen de Freece-Wilson, "Era Bell Thompson: Chicago Renaissance Writer" (PhD diss., State University of New Jersey, 2010), 173-176.

⁶⁵⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, February 1964, 23; "Masthead," *Ebony*, March 1964, 4.

⁶⁵⁷ "20 Years of *Ebony*," *Ebony*, November 1965, 58; David H. Hosley and Gayle K. Yamada, *Hard News: Women in Broadcast Journalism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987), 98.

⁶⁵⁸ Peggy Orenstein, "Ms. Fights for its Life," *Mother Jones*, November-December 1990, 36.

female employees revolted against institutionalised gender discrimination.⁶⁵⁹ Similarly, JPC provided a space for black women to advance on an administrative and executive level – most notably Eunice Johnson, who exerted a significant influence over the magazine’s business strategy, and masterminded the enormously successful *Ebony* Fashion Fair.⁶⁶⁰

Without a detailed understanding of the everyday interactions between members of *Ebony*’s editorial team during this period, it is difficult to assess exactly how these gender imbalances affected the construction of gender and sexuality in the magazine’s content. However, it is significant that the consolidation of Bennett’s position as *Ebony*’s resident historian paralleled an entrenchment of its patriarchal editorial hierarchy. As Molefi Kete Asante has noted, Bennett’s role as the JPC house historian provided him with ‘an unusual independence’ over his content.⁶⁶¹ Furthermore, Bennett’s reputation as a black history expert, was cultivated within the highly gendered space provided by *Ebony*’s offices. As a result, there was arguably less of an incentive for him to challenge his underlying beliefs about black history, or his understanding of the relationship between black masculinity and black protest.

In turn, the intellectual environment provided by outlets such as the Institute of the Black World helped to consolidate Bennett’s gendered construction of Black Power and black history. In *The Challenge of Blackness: the Institute of the Black World and Political Activism in the 1970s*, Derrick White offers an incisive critique of the internecine gender conflicts which

⁶⁵⁹ Lynn Povich, *The Good Girls Revolt: How the Women of Newsweek Sued Their Bosses and Changed the Workplace* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2012), 1.

⁶⁶⁰ “Backstage,” *Ebony*, March 1972, 28; Joy Bivins and Rosemary K. Adams, *Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of the Ebony Fashion Fair* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2013); “Fashions and Business Set Her Lifestyle,” *Ebony*, August 1977, 74.

⁶⁶¹ Asante, *The African American People*, 367.

characterised the organisation's formative years, and suggests that such conflicts marked a continuation of weaknesses 'often found in black (and white) intellectual circles.'⁶⁶² This was partly informed by the nucleus of male scholars such as Bennett, Harding, Stephen Henderson, Gerald McWhorter, A. B. Spellman and William Strickland out of which the Institute emerged.⁶⁶³ It was also exacerbated by the shadow Harding cast over the Institute's development – a point noted by affiliates such as Sylvia Wynter.⁶⁶⁴

Gendered hierarchies of production provided both a challenge and an opportunity for *Ebony's* female editors, but we must also recognise the Institute of the Black World's role as both a liberatory and restrictive space for black female intellectuals. In some respects, the Institute provided a productive environment for both male and female activists to critique the role of sex and gender within the black freedom movement. In 1969, Ella Baker delivered a talk for the Institute titled 'The Black Woman in the Civil Rights Struggle', in which she attacked the 'sexist attitudes and practices' which had become entrenched in the movement.⁶⁶⁵ Similarly, although White has noted that the disproportionate absence of women from major early events such as the Institute's 1971 Summer Research Symposium was indicative of the 'marginalized role of women' within the organisation as a whole, he also suggests that this did not preclude the Institute from providing a vibrant and important intellectual space for black female intellectuals.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶² White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 91

⁶⁶³ Marable, "Black Studies and the Racial Mountain," 20; Joseph, "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," 268-269.

⁶⁶⁴ Sylvia Wynter to IBW Members, November 1971, Box 2, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁶⁶⁵ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Struggle: a Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 352.

⁶⁶⁶ White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 95.

Nevertheless, the high esteem placed on Bennett's role at the Institute helped to reinforce his gendered understanding of black history. Harding believed Bennett to be one of the nation's most important black historians; a point reaffirmed by his contention that Bennett's historical vision offered a 'personal distillation and clarification' of the Institute's aims through speeches such as 'The Challenge of Blackness' in 1969.⁶⁶⁷ In this address, Bennett looked to cement the position of the black man at the centre of a universal black experience. He contended that 'blackness constitutes the truth of the truth', and that 'the black man is the truth or close to the truth.'⁶⁶⁸ This position fed into the struggles of the Institute's female members to carve out more active intellectual roles within the organisation. Bennett's conflation of the black man with the 'truth' of black history resonated with many of the Institute's male members, whose commitment to racial and class radicalism did not always extend to the question of gender equality.⁶⁶⁹

We can also see how Bennett's construction of a patrilineal black history had been consolidated by his emergence as a prominent black male historian and public intellectual by the early 1970s. *Ebony* pointed to the concurrent publication of *The Challenge of Blackness* in 1972 and Bennett's appointment to the teaching staff at Northwestern University as evidence of his place 'among the most outstanding writers, scholars and thinkers in the United States today.'⁶⁷⁰ Just as Bennett would declare that 'the black man is the truth or close to the truth', so too would *Ebony's* readers connect Bennett's reliability to his position as a black man.⁶⁷¹ The shift from Bennett as a writer of patrilineal black

⁶⁶⁷ Harding, "Introduction to Black Paper No. 1," Box 2, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁶⁶⁸ White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 20

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶⁷⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, April 1972, 28.

⁶⁷¹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, April 1968, 18.

history to a historically significant figure in his own right was confirmed in 'The Black Male' special of 1972, which shortlisted him as one of the 30 most important black men in history.⁶⁷² He would also come to be a fixture on *Ebony's* annual list of the 100 most influential black Americans.⁶⁷³ By the beginning of his fifth black history series in 1975, Bennett's role as the magazine's historical expert was beyond question; a role predicated on the enduring quest 'for freedom, equality, and manhood.'⁶⁷⁴

These Black Men Helped Change the World!

From a different perspective, we can see how the preoccupation with black male pioneers in Bennett's coverage of black history was consolidated by the advertising turn towards black history from the mid-1960s onwards. As scholars such as Jason Chambers and Robert Weems have demonstrated, the integration of black citizens into American consumer society became a vital element of the broader struggle for civil rights.⁶⁷⁵ The exclusion of blacks from both corporate advertising and the advertising industry was taken up by organisations such as CORE and the NAACP, who threatened to organise boycotts against major advertisers and advertising agencies.⁶⁷⁶ Relatedly, American corporations looked to channel the pro-black aesthetic of the Black Arts Movement into marketing appeals to black consumers. Through doing so, they contributed to the development of 'black capitalism' as a potent shorthand for the 'complex intersection of black power and business history.'⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷² "Ten Greats of Black History," *Ebony*, August 1972, 35.

⁶⁷³ "The 100 Most Influential Black Americans," *Ebony*, April 1971, 34.

⁶⁷⁴ Salley, *The Black 100*, 259.

⁶⁷⁵ Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line*; Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar*.

⁶⁷⁶ Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in the Advertising, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Westport; Greenwood Press, 1994), 116-117.

⁶⁷⁷ Hill and Rabig, "Toward a History of the Business of Black Power," 26.

As noted in chapter one, sporadic attempts by advertisers to co-opt black history during the 1950s had been met with editorial resistance in *Ebony*. However, as American businesses looked for new marketing strategies to ingratiate themselves to black consumers during the 1960s, they returned to black history with a vengeance.⁶⁷⁸ As the nation's most popular black media outlet, *Ebony* became a key space for black history themed adverts, which were used to justify corporate awareness of and sensitivity to black consumers. However, because advertisers often took their cue from *Ebony*'s own coverage of black history, they helped to reinforce its gendered depiction of the black past and its celebration of black men. One of the strongest examples of this trend was also one of the first – a series of infomercials produced by Old Taylor Kentucky Straight Bourbon under the title of 'Ingenious Americans', which began publication in *Ebony* a month before the first article in Bennett's 'Black Power' series was published, and would continue into the 1970s.⁶⁷⁹

There was an unmistakeable connection between the magazine's historical coverage and the figures chosen to appear in Old Taylor's 'Ingenious Americans' series.⁶⁸⁰ The first figure profiled in the advertising series was Benjamin Banneker, the black astronomer and mathematician who had been referenced in *Ebony* on numerous occasions, and who had been the subject of the first article in Bennett's 'Pioneers in Protest' series.⁶⁸¹ Mimicking the tone of Bennett's profile, the Old Taylor advert provided an artistic rendering of Banneker above a five paragraph eulogy of his life. The advert declared that the

⁶⁷⁸ Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line*, 93.

⁶⁷⁹ "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, October 1966, 111; "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, March 1972, 121.

⁶⁸⁰ "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, December 1966, 157; "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, January 1967, 121; "Thinking Men Earn Big," *Ebony*, October 1964, 74.

⁶⁸¹ "Visit the Nation's Capital," *Ebony*, June 1961, 89; Bennett, "Miscegenation in America," 95; Bennett, "The Negro in the American Revolution," 98; Bennett, "Pioneers in Protest Part 1," 50.

physical design of the nation's capital continued to stand as a 'living monument' to Banneker's genius.⁶⁸²

Relatedly, just as *Ebony* emphasised its role as a tool for black historical empowerment, advertisers stressed the educational value of their black history features. Each vignette in Old Taylor's 'Ingenious Americans' series offered a free educational booklet to readers about the figures profiled in its series.⁶⁸³ The positioning of these adverts was often strategic; frequently placed next to articles about challenging underrepresentation of black history within the American school system, or in the middle of articles from Bennett's 'Black Power' series.⁶⁸⁴ Through being placed in this way, Old Taylor's adverts became part of a dialogue between *Ebony's* criticisms of black historical representation and the corporate response.⁶⁸⁵ In articles such as 'Reading, 'Riting and Racism', Bennett argued that the intellectual and psychological development of black children was being fundamentally damaged by the 'paternalistic put-downs of social science and history textbooks.'⁶⁸⁶ Intersecting his words were adverts from Old Taylor which complemented Bennett's own historical recovery by offering 'the complete story' of black pioneers such as Matthew Alexander Henson.⁶⁸⁷

In turn, the publication of the Old Taylor series paralleled the investigations of the Kerner Commission, to which Bennett had testified in 1967 that American textbooks were 'woefully deficient in teaching white children anything about black people and in teaching black people anything about

⁶⁸² "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, October 1966, 111.

⁶⁸³ "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, February 1967, 10.

⁶⁸⁴ "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, December 1966, 157; "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, January 1967, 121; "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, February 1971, 47.

⁶⁸⁵ "After Identity, What?," *Ebony*, February 1969, 98; Poinsett, "Ghetto Schools: an Educational Wasteland," *Ebony*, August 1967, 52.

⁶⁸⁶ Bennett, "Reading, 'Riting and Racism," *Ebony*, March 1967, 130-138.

⁶⁸⁷ "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, March 1967, 133

themselves.’⁶⁸⁸ His testimony fed into the Commission’s final report, which contended that the American media had ‘failed to report adequately on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and the underlying problems of race relations’, and had ‘not shown understanding or appreciation of — and thus have not communicated — a sense of Negro culture, thought or history.’⁶⁸⁹ When readers such as Donald Schmizzi pointed to the ‘gross omission’ of figures such as Banneker, Matzeliger, McCoy, Garret A. Morgan, Granville T. Woods and Andrew J. Beard from American history books, they highlighted not only *Ebony’s* role in recovering these figures, but also the role of corporate advertisers.⁶⁹⁰

The dominant message which readers took away from the Old Taylor series was frequently different to that expressed in Bennett’s black history articles. In presenting Banneker as an American patriot, the advert neglected a key aspect of Bennett’s profile – his lifelong struggle against the hypocrisy and bigotry of his own country. The Banneker envisioned through the Old Taylor series was afforded a picturesque retirement, where he was ‘sought out by distinguished men of science and art.’ This contrasted with Bennett’s profile of Banneker, which depicted him living out his final days in fear and ‘in dwindling hope’ as slavery ‘continued its ominous march across the soul of America.’⁶⁹¹ This tension between the critique and commemoration of black history, which had been a notable element of *Ebony’s* 1963 special, would become a key point of contention during the 1970s and 1980s.

⁶⁸⁸ Lerone Bennett Testimony, Box 6, Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁶⁸⁹ Lloyd Chiasson, *The Press in Times of Crisis* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 172-173.

⁶⁹⁰ “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, May 1967, 18.

⁶⁹¹ Bennett, “Pioneers in Protest Part 1,” 58.

Whilst the Old Taylor series may have differed from Bennett's black history series in terms of tone, it reinforced the latter's choice of content through centring the black man in its considerations of black history. The 'Ingenious Americans' featured a total of eleven different individuals across a score of adverts between 1966 and 1972; none of whom were women.⁶⁹² Significantly, the series did not remain static in its representation of these figures. By the sixth instalment of the series in March 1967 pencil drawings of the men had been replaced by images of sculptured busts. Old Taylor invited readers to purchase the busts, made of 'antique bronze cast stone', for a non-profit price of just \$5.00.⁶⁹³ In 1968 the adverts doubled in size from one to two pages, with one page dedicated to a biographical description and the other offering a full page image of the bust.⁶⁹⁴ This gendered disparity would be rendered even more obvious through adverts which featured multiple figures profiled together, under the heading 'these black men helped change the world!'⁶⁹⁵

Such biases in black historical representation would be taken up by other prominent advertisers such as Coca-Cola and Seagram, who, in different ways, demonstrated their awareness of *Ebony's* historical content and its reception. Coca-Cola profiled its introduction of the 'Golden Legacy' magazine series in *Ebony*, a collection of 'factual, illustrated stories' which were designed to appeal to young readers. Just as *Ebony* had looked to reject the potential limitations of the periodical as an educational form by pointing to its recommendation by 'official' black history sources, so too did Coca-Cola note that the 'Golden

⁶⁹² The men profiled in the Old Taylor series were Benjamin Banneker, Garrett A. Morgan, Elijah McCoy, Jan Matzeliger, Granville T. Woods, Matthew Alexander Henson, Daniel Hale Williams, Norbert Rillieux, Charles Richard Drew, Lewis Latimer, and Frederick McKinley Jones.

⁶⁹³ "Ingenious Americans," *Ebony*, March 1967, 133.

⁶⁹⁴ "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, July 1969, 50.

⁶⁹⁵ "Ingenious Americans," *Ebony*, September 1968, 10-11; "Ingenious Americans," *Ebony*, October 1968, 11-12; "Ingenious Americans," *Ebony*, March 1970, 48-49.

Legacy' magazine series was 'endorsed by the National Urban League and the NAACP.' Harriet Tubman and Alexander Dumas were the two figures profiled through adverts in *Ebony*, suggesting a more balanced representation of gender than offered through the Old Taylor series.⁶⁹⁶ However, in the eleven original volumes in the 'Golden Legacy' series, Tubman was the only woman profiled.⁶⁹⁷

Seagram's promotion of its 'Black Historical Calendar' in *Ebony* maintained the gendered depiction of black history presented through Bennett's black history articles and adverts from corporations such as Old Taylor and Coca-Cola. The Seagram historical calendar had been started in 1969, and purported to offer a 'dramatic record of Negro achievement' in calendar form.⁶⁹⁸ Like Old Taylor and Coca-Cola, Seagram played up the educational value of its product, contending that the calendar offered readers their 'own black studies program.'⁶⁹⁹ Seagram's black history calendar was arguably the most representative of the three advertising series' profiled here, with an advert for the 1972 calendar profiling black women in two out of the twelve months available.⁷⁰⁰ However, its adverts were still characterised by the image of men such as Martin Luther King, Langston Hughes and Jan Matzeliger, who functioned as a substitute for black history as a whole.⁷⁰¹

The Moynihan Report, Black History and the Black Woman

Bennett's gendered depiction of black history, its construction with the patriarchal confines of spaces such as JPC and the Institute of the Black World,

⁶⁹⁶ "Coca-Cola," *Ebony*, February 1969, 15; "Coca-Cola," *Ebony*, June 1970, 15.

⁶⁹⁷ "Magazine Titles," *Golden Legacy Illustrated History Series*, <http://golden-legacy.com/about>.

⁶⁹⁸ "Seagram," *Ebony*, January 1970, 8.

⁶⁹⁹ "Seagram," *Ebony*, November 1971, 123.

⁷⁰⁰ The women profiled were Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Lorraine Hansberry.

⁷⁰¹ "Seagram," *Ebony*, January 1970, 8; "Seagram," *Ebony*, January 1971, 10; "Seagram," *Ebony*, November 1971, 123; "Seagram," *Ebony*, November 1972, 10; "Seagram," *Ebony*, December 1972, 83

and its reinforcement by corporate advertisers, can be mapped onto and against the broader hierarchies of race, class, sex and gender within the modern black freedom struggle. During the 1950s and early 1960s, these hierarchies often manifested themselves through the model of black male middle-class leadership embodied by figures such as Martin Luther King, Roy Innis, and Fred Shuttlesworth.⁷⁰² As the civil rights movement developed, its 'critique of existing practices and assumptions' did provide a platform for activists to interrogate gender relations.⁷⁰³ However, the public fallout to the publication of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action* in 1965, alongside the rise of Black Power, demonstrated that 'most black nationalist organizations saw a rehabilitated "manhood" as essential to black progress and esteem.'⁷⁰⁴

The Negro Family, which quickly became known as the Moynihan Report, constituted one of the controversial and significant public policy documents of the 1960s.⁷⁰⁵ Written by Moynihan during his time as Assistant Secretary of Labor, the report helped to naturalise 'the idea of the emasculated black man and the castrating black matriarch.'⁷⁰⁶ Moynihan contended that 'at the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time.'⁷⁰⁷ Irrespective of the report's intended outcomes, its notorious reputation quickly became 'a paradigm that was more

⁷⁰² Kirk, "Relationships: Women and Gender, Sex and Sexuality," in *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movements: Controversies and Debates*, ed. Kirk (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 142-148.

⁷⁰³ Ling and Monteith, "Introduction," 3.

⁷⁰⁴ Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 114.

⁷⁰⁵ Moynihan, "The Negro Family"; Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights*, 3-6.

⁷⁰⁶ Margo Crawford, "Must Revolution Be a Family Affair? Revisiting *The Black Woman*," in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, ed. Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 190.

⁷⁰⁷ Moynihan, "The Negro Family."

toxic than the layer of pathology in the actual report.’⁷⁰⁸ James Patterson has argued that Moynihan’s proclivity for presenting ‘highly-sensitive issues in near-apocalyptic terms’ provided an image of the black family as practically beyond repair.⁷⁰⁹

The Moynihan Report was eviscerated by a host of influential black activists, who echoed William Ryan’s ‘bitter takedown’ of the report and the contention that it justified inequality ‘by finding defects in the victims of inequality.’⁷¹⁰ Yet as scholars such as Roderick Ferguson have noted, although many Black Power activists attacked Moynihan’s depiction of a ‘pathological’ black family, they agreed in principle with his concerns over the ‘emasculating effects of black women and the need for black men to resume their role as patriarchs.’⁷¹¹ Madhu Dubey has argued that the overlap between narratives about the black family emanating from black nationalist and government discourses during the 1960s exposed ‘the hidden gender lines that limited what claimed to be racial discourse representing all blacks.’⁷¹²

Such reservations over the potentially emasculating role of black women helped to foster a division in *Ebony*’s coverage of the role of black women in the struggle for racial equality. Whilst Bennett’s writing looked to celebrate the historical contributions of pioneering black female activists, his coverage of the modern civil rights movement often served to place women in a secondary or subsidiary role. In a panoramic survey of ‘The Negro Woman’ which paralleled

⁷⁰⁸ Crawford, “Must Revolution Be A Family Affair?,” 190.

⁷⁰⁹ James T. Patterson, *Freedom is Not Enough: the Moynihan Report and America’s Struggle Over Black Family Life from LBJ to Obama* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), xiv.

⁷¹⁰ Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: a History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 45; Moynihan, “Letter to Harry McPherson, 11 September 1966,” in *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: a Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary*, ed. Steven R. Veisman (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 126.

⁷¹¹ Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 123.

⁷¹² Madhu Dubey, *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 17.

his profile of Frederick Douglass as the 'father of the protest movement', Bennett noted how the institution of slavery had 'devaluated the role of the Negro male.'⁷¹³ Although this burden had offered some positive outcomes - such as engendering a militant tradition of black female leadership - Bennett also warned that 'one result of the traditional independence of the Negro woman is that she is more in conflict with her innate biological role than the white woman.'⁷¹⁴

This anxiety can be seen through Bennett's descriptions of enslaved women which frequently connected their ability to secure freedom with an embrace of masculine characteristics. For example, Ellen Craft's escape from slavery was predicated on the shedding of her femininity, as she cut her hair and donned male clothes to play the part of a young planter.⁷¹⁵ Similarly, Bennett described Harriet Tubman as the 'famous "Moses" of the movement', and emphasised Sojourner Truth's 'deep, almost masculine voice that could fill the largest hall.'⁷¹⁶ In an effort to move away from this tension, the historian declared that the role of the 'new Negro woman' should be focused on a realignment with prevailing social norms. Bennett argued that 'having proved that women are people, the Negro woman now faces a greater task. In an age when Negroes and whites, men and women, are confused about the meaning of femininity, she must prove that women are also women.'⁷¹⁷

This assertion would appear to become a more prominent aspect of Bennett's writing as the 1960s progressed, and in particular through his coverage of and relationship to Black Power. As noted in chapter three,

⁷¹³ Bennett, "The Black Woman," 86.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 88.

⁷¹⁵ Bennett, "Generation of Crisis," 82.

⁷¹⁶ Bennett, "Sojourner Truth," 68.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., 94.

Bennett's descriptions of Black Power during Reconstruction fed into his depiction of a shirtless Carmichael as the 'architect of Black Power' and a trope for unapologetic black masculinity. Following the individual triumph of the highway showdown where 'a man had challenged a man – and a man had answered', Carmichael arrived in Lowndes County to be met by women and children who 'gathered on the porches, dancing, screaming and shouting.'⁷¹⁸ Images of Carmichael relaxing at home with his Aunties, and dancing with two of his sisters, reinforced the connection between black women and the domestic sphere – at least within the context of Black Power.⁷¹⁹

Such biases become more problematic when we consider the ways in which Bennett used black history to offer a critique of the struggle for racial equality in the present. By situating the emergence of Black Power within a specific historical timeframe, Bennett helped to connect the rise of Black Power in the 1960s to the gendered hierarchies of late nineteenth century black politics. Bennett argued that the gains made during Reconstruction had been possible because 'power was black, black men were men, and black women were women.' In turn, the realisation of black economic and political power helped to reify the value of heteronormativity within the black community; for 'without power, men cannot be men – and if men cannot be men than women cannot be women.'⁷²⁰ Through adopting such rhetoric, Bennett explicitly positioned normative gender roles as an important catalyst in the modern struggle for civil rights. This position suggested that while the 'crucial role' played by black women in the historical struggle for freedom should be

⁷¹⁸ Bennett, "Stokely Carmichael," 25.

⁷¹⁹ Bennett's article did feature one image of Carmichael alongside Ruby Robinson, and identified Robinson in passing as an SNCC leader.

⁷²⁰ Bennett, "Black Power Part 7," *Ebony*, October 1966, 153.

celebrated, their primary role in the modern civil rights movement should be the preservation of the black family.⁷²¹

The suggestion that black women should focus on the family to accommodate the realisation of black manhood was put forward explicitly through a photo-editorial in *Ebony's* 1966 special on 'The Negro Woman', which argued that the black woman's primary goal should be 'the establishment of a strong family unit in which the father is the dominant person.' Furthermore, the feature suggested that the black woman should recommit herself to being 'a wife and mother instead of a heavy-handed family boss.'⁷²² Such statements appeared to substantiate the work of scholars like Robyn Wiegman, who has argued that 'Black Power asserted black masculinity as coterminous with racial emancipation.'⁷²³ Feminist critics blasted the photo-editorial as 'blatantly Victorian', and pointed to *Ebony's* coverage as evidence that 'the main thrust of black militancy is a bid by black males to share power with white males in a continuing patriarchal society.'⁷²⁴

The secondary role of women in the Black Power movement would appear to have been confirmed by the make-up of *Ebony's* 1969 special issue, which marked the high point of its engagement with the 'black revolution.' Johnson contended that 'here black leaders, black philosophers, black activists and black historians discuss the Black Revolution in terms that black people can understand.'⁷²⁵ But the terms of this debate were dictated by black males. Sixteen out of the seventeen named contributors in the special were men, and

⁷²¹ Bennett, "The Negro Woman," 86.

⁷²² "For A Better Future," *Ebony*, August 1966, 150.

⁷²³ Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 107.

⁷²⁴ Pauli Murray, "The Liberation of Black Women," in *Words of Fire: an Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: New Press, 1995), 189.

⁷²⁵ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1969, 29.

any form of gender critique was conspicuously absent. It was only in the 'Speaking of People' section through brief profiles of women such as Shirley Chisholm and Kathleen Cleaver that *Ebony* offered any direct consideration of black women's engagement with Black Power.⁷²⁶ Even in the sole feature about a black woman by a black woman – Phyl Garland's profile of Nina Simone – the centrality of black masculinity was emphasised.⁷²⁷ Garland contended that through her lyrics and songs, Simone 'speaks not only of love, but of the black man's pain and passion whipped into a swelling rage.'⁷²⁸

Similarly, the tensions hinted at through the *Before the Mayflower* themed *Jet* calendar described in chapter two were rendered explicit through later issues of the *Jet* calendar during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁷²⁹ These calendars provided readers with important dates in black history, but in contrast to the romanticised images of black icons presented through Seagram's calendars, provided semi-pornographic images of black female models.⁷³⁰ For example, the *Jet* Calendar for 1969 celebrated dates such as the birth of Harriet Tubman and Mary McLeod Bethune, and the achievements of black businesswomen such as Madame C. J. Walker and Maggie Lena Walker.⁷³¹ Alongside these dates were naked and semi-naked images of black models which reinforced the connection between femininity and the domestic sphere. All of the models were photographed within the household, a number were

⁷²⁶ "Speaking of People," *Ebony*, August 1969, 6-7.

⁷²⁷ Phyl Garland, "Nina Simone: High Priestess of Soul," *Ebony*, August 1969, 156.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁷²⁹ "Jet Calendar," *Ebony*, November 1972, 174; "Jet Calendar," *Ebony*, January 1973, 48.

⁷³⁰ "Jet Calendar," *Ebony*, January 1969, 69; "Seagram," *Ebony*, December 1972, 83.

⁷³¹ 1969 Calendar, Box 35, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

performing explicitly gendered tasks such as dusting or washing dishes, and used these physical symbols of domesticity to shield their naked bodies.⁷³²

Ebony, Black History, and 'Compulsory Heterosexuality'

Just as Bennett's time at Morehouse can be seen to have positioned him as an 'antiracist patriarch', so too can we see how his experiences at the institution helped to frame his understanding of the relationship between black history and sexuality.⁷³³ While Mays pushed Morehouse further toward an embrace of 'theories of integration and universal humanity', the College's religious underpinnings and its deference to respectability politics helped to foster a distinctly heterosexist vision of black life.⁷³⁴ Morehouse's deep roots in a black southern Protestant tradition, and its emphasis on the inviolability of black manhood, can be argued to have fostered a climate which positioned homosexuality as 'an enormously worrisome issue.'⁷³⁵ This is not to say that within the context of 1940s American sexual politics the position of Morehouse was an aggressively conservative one.⁷³⁶ Nonetheless, more recent attempts to confront its 'institutionalized homophobia' can be situated within a historical deference to heteronormative patriarchy as a route to racial respectability and uplift.⁷³⁷

Relatedly, shifts in *Ebony's* content during the 1950s and 1960s would appear to support the work of scholars who have contended that the coalescing

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Heltzel, *Resurrection City*, 119.

⁷³⁴ Karen Jane Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 4-5; Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 51

⁷³⁵ Stephen Nelson, *Leaders in the Labyrinth: College Presidents and the Battleground of Creeds and Convictions* (Westport: Praeger Publishing, 2007), 74.

⁷³⁶ K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005), xx.

⁷³⁷ Gary L. Lemons, *Womanist Forefathers: Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 143.

struggle for racial equality during the years since World War II had a limiting effect on public affirmations of black sexual expression and diversity. Brett Billings has suggested that *Ebony's* content during the 1940s and early 1950s offered a significantly more progressive depiction of professional women, gender roles and sexuality than white publications such as *Esquire*.⁷³⁸ This point has been reiterated by Thaddeus Russell, who has argued that the black community, and in particular working class black Americans, were 'far more open to homosexuality and nonheteronormative behaviour' than whites prior to the rise of the modern civil rights movement.⁷³⁹

Allen Drexel has pointed to *Ebony's* coverage of black drag balls at the peak of Cold War anti-gay and anti-Communist sentiment during the 1940s and early 1950s as evidence of the magazine's willingness to document nonheteronormative black identities.⁷⁴⁰ While the tone of such articles betrayed a 'deep ambivalence' toward gay men and lesbians, they nonetheless demonstrated an 'exceptional openness toward and even an open fascination with representations of homosexuality and drag' that were frequently absent from the mainstream white press.⁷⁴¹ However, these scholars also agree that the consolidation of the civil rights movement around pervasive notions of middle class respectability served to fundamentally alter discussions about homosexuality within the black community.⁷⁴² From this position, it appeared

⁷³⁸ Brett Powers Billings, "No Man's Land: the Construction of Middle-Class Masculinity in *Ebony* and *Esquire*, 1948-1953" (MA diss., Oklahoma State University, 2006), 59.

⁷³⁹ Russell, "The Color of Discipline," 103.

⁷⁴⁰ Allen Drexel, "Before Paris Burned: Race, Class and Male Homosexuality on the Chicago South Side, 1935-1960," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community Histories*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Routledge, 1997), 119-144; Craig M. Loftin, *Masked Voices: Gay Men and Lesbians in Cold War America* (Albany: State University of New York, 2012), 2-5.

⁷⁴¹ Drexel, "Before Paris Burned," 134.

⁷⁴² Michael G. Long, *Martin Luther King, Jr., Homosexuality, and the Early Gay Rights Movement: Keeping the Dream Straight?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-6.

that 'the price of admission to American society for African Americans would be a surrender to heterosexual norms.'⁷⁴³

Ebony's expanding coverage of the black past reflected a broader deference to what Adrienne Rich has described as 'compulsory heterosexuality' in historical representation.⁷⁴⁴ As Mattie Udora Richardson has acknowledged, the longstanding tradition of representing blacks as 'decent and moral historical agents has meant the erasure of the broad array of Black sexuality and gendered being in favor of a static heterosexual narrative.'⁷⁴⁵ Just as Bennett's historical coverage frequently elevated the role of black men, so too did it reify a heteronormative black past and the relationship between heterosexuality and activist potential. This was clear from early features such as his 1960 article on Marcus Garvey, which relayed Garvey's message through his two ex-wives.⁷⁴⁶ Similarly, the very first article in his 'Negro History' series opened with a celebration of the 'strong bronzed men and regal black women from whose loins sprang one out of every ten Americans.'⁷⁴⁷

This trend was consolidated through 'Before the Mayflower' in September 1961, which introduced a recurring trope in Bennett's writing – that of the 'founding' black family. In describing the origins of black America, Bennett declared that 'it began with a love story. Antony, who has no surname, fell in love with Isabella and married her.'⁷⁴⁸ As part of the first cohort of black Africans who arrived in the New World, Antony and Isabella would become parents to the first black children born in America. Bennett contended that 'there were

⁷⁴³ Russell, "The Color of Discipline," 113.

⁷⁴⁴ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5 (1980): 634-636.

⁷⁴⁵ Richardson, "No More Secrets, No More Lies," 64.

⁷⁴⁶ Bennett, "The Ghost of Marcus Garvey," 53.

⁷⁴⁷ Bennett, "The African Past," 34.

⁷⁴⁸ Bennett, "Before the Mayflower," 32.

other ships, other William Tuckers, other Antonys and other Isabellas – millions and millions.⁷⁴⁹ He would return to this story in his articles and books numerous times, and it would be reiterated by other contributors to *Ebony*, including the magazine's publisher Johnson.⁷⁵⁰

Through privileging the story of Antony and Isabella above that of their fellow black settlers, Bennett celebrated this original black couple as the true founding mother and father of black America. Frances Smith Foster, who is one of the few scholars to have examined Bennett's depiction of Antony and Isabella in length, has illustrated how Bennett's depiction of this couple as 'the Grand Parents of African America' served to position them within an image of the American dream which 'assumes a nuclear, heterosexual, monogamous family.'⁷⁵¹ Relatedly, in looking to rehabilitate the slave family, historians such as John Blassingame and Herbert Gutman can be argued to have inadvertently reinforced the findings of the Moynihan Report.⁷⁵² Even as studies such as Gutman's *The Black Family* rejected the destruction of the slave family envisioned by earlier scholars such as Stanley Elkins, they demonstrated that many black historians of the 1970s still lacked an effectively vocabulary 'with which to speak or write about gender.'⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁵⁰ Bennett, "No Crystal Stair," 165; Bennett, "Ten Most Dramatic Events in Negro History," 28; Bennett, "The First Generation," 33; Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1966, 25; Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1972, 33.

⁷⁵¹ Frances Smith Foster, *'Til Death or Distance Do Us Part: Love and Marriage in African America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 1-2.

⁷⁵² John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 151; Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

⁷⁵³ Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: a Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1994), xxviii; Diana Paton, "Family," in *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, ed. Junius P. Rodriguez (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 265.

Bennett's depiction of Antony and Isabella as the 'Grand Parents of African America' situated the foundations of black history on heterosexual norms, and offered a powerful rebuttal to the subtext of homosexuality which underpinned the Moynihan Report's discussion of black masculinity.⁷⁵⁴ As scholars such as Daniel Geary and Kevin Mumford have demonstrated, the Moynihan Report resonated with a post-war social science tradition which 'connected pathology with black homosexuality.'⁷⁵⁵ Although Bennett's considerations of black liberation stretched across lines of class and, to an extent, race, it appeared that his understanding of liberation and its salience to the black freedom struggle did not extend beyond the parameters of heteronormativity.⁷⁵⁶ Indeed, Bennett's brief engagements with the question of homosexuality in black history had suggested that he saw it as a threat to black masculinity and the black family in the present.

This sentiment was expressed through Bennett's fierce rejection of William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, which was published in John Henrik Clarke's *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond*, and reprinted in *Ebony*.⁷⁵⁷ Bennett seized upon Styron's description of a homosexual encounter in the life of Turner as evidence of Styron's attempts to defuse Turner's sexuality and accomplish his 'ultimate end by emasculating Nat Turner.'⁷⁵⁸ In fairness to Bennett, this criticism was just one of many levied at Styron, whose work was pilloried by black activists. However, by rejecting Styron's depiction of Turner, and connecting black liberation to heterosexuality and the black family, Bennett implied that homosexuality could provide a hurdle

⁷⁵⁴ Mumford, "Untangling Pathology," 59.

⁷⁵⁵ Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights*, 150-151.

⁷⁵⁶ Bennett, "Liberation," 36-43.

⁷⁵⁷ Bennett, "Nat's Last White Man," in *The Second Crucifixion of Nat Turner*, ed. John Henrik Clarke (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1997), 3-16.

⁷⁵⁸ Bennett, "The Case Against Styron's Nat Turner," *Ebony*, October 1968, 155.

to racial progress. This stance was echoed by other contributors to *William Styron's Nat Turner*, with the question of homosexuality being seen as antithetical to both black progress and the 'truth' of black history.

As Roderick Ferguson has noted, black nationalist thought frequently intersected with 'sociological discourses and state aims by demanding the gendered and sexual regulation of African American nonheteronormative formations.'⁷⁵⁹ Whilst Bennett's historical coverage did not offer an explicit rejection of homosexuality, his deference to a heteronormative black history reflected broader anxieties over the way in which black queerness could function as 'a threat to black respectability.'⁷⁶⁰ This concern would be taken up in a much cruder way by figures such as Eldridge Cleaver, who came to symbolise the unsavoury intersections between Black Power misogyny and homophobia.⁷⁶¹ Alongside claims that the rape of white women constituted an act of political rebellion, Cleaver declared that 'homosexuality is a sickness, just as are baby-rape or wanting to become the head of General Motors.'⁷⁶²

Cleaver's comparison of homosexuality with a Fordist model of American capitalism offered a telling articulation of the relationship between production, black masculinity and liberation as understood by many black nationalists. Through using such rhetoric, Cleaver echoed the sentiments of the Moynihan Report, which had contended that as long as pathologies within black relationships and the black family persisted, blacks would be unable to 'meet the competitive challenges of a liberal capitalist society.'⁷⁶³ If one of the tenets

⁷⁵⁹ Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 111.

⁷⁶⁰ Richardson, "No More Secrets, No More Lies," 64.

⁷⁶¹ Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein: the Making of an American Metaphor* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 202-203.

⁷⁶² Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 110.

⁷⁶³ Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 119.

of black liberation was economic liberation, then homosexuals could be seen as a threat to the black family, but also as redundant to black progress in a capitalist democracy. Cleaver asserted that black homosexuals were 'outraged and frustrated because in their sickness they are unable to have a baby by a white man...the fruit of their miscegenation is not the little half-white offspring of their dreams but an increasing in the unwinding of their nerves.'⁷⁶⁴

This analogy also served to locate black homosexuality as an outcome of Western modernity.⁷⁶⁵ From this perspective, considerations of homosexuality did not apply to pre-modern Africa as the genealogical homeland for black Americans, or the 'strong bronzed men and regal black women' depicted by Bennett.⁷⁶⁶ Cleaver sought to rationalise the 'emergence' of homosexuality within black communities by situating it as a corruption learned from white society – a position taken up by a number of black nationalists and Afrocentrists, who positioned homosexuality as antithetical to collective black progress.⁷⁶⁷ Amiri Baraka's understanding of homosexuality as an 'anti-black' concept was laid out forcefully in a letter to Eunice and John Johnson in 1973, which argued that *Ebony's* employment of 'anonymo-sexual mamalukes' such as stylist Ron Marable reflected an embrace of 'white degeneracy.'⁷⁶⁸

In *Ebony*, the notion that homosexuality was an acquired trait within the black community was expressed through the writing of 'black family experts' such as Alvin Poussaint and Robert Staples, who became prominent

⁷⁶⁴ Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 102.

⁷⁶⁵ Michael Denning, "The Age of the CIO," in *American Studies: an Anthology*, ed. Janice A. Radway et al. (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 168.

⁷⁶⁶ Bennett, "The African Past," 34.

⁷⁶⁷ Asante, *Afrocentricity: the Theory of Social Change* (Chicago: African American Images, 2003), 73; Amiri Baraka, *Home: Social Essays* (New York: William Morrow, 1966), 216-233; Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Verso, 1990), 63.

⁷⁶⁸ "Beauty Clinic: Introducing Ron Marable," *Ebony*, December 1972, 35; Amiri Baraka to Eunice Johnson cc. John Johnson, 7 March 1973, Box 15, Hoyt Fuller Papers.

contributors to *Ebony* during the late 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁶⁹ Poussaint argued that homosexuality was a sign of 'masculine inadequacy' and contended that 'such disorders are reported to be few among black males in Africa.'⁷⁷⁰ Relatedly, Staples suggested that many black men had 'acquired their homosexual behaviour as prison inmates', linking a perceived rise in black homosexuality to the development of post-war mass incarceration.⁷⁷¹ This fear would be expressed in more sensationalised terms by Winston Moore, the head of Cook County Jail, who asserted that the majority of American prisoners were 'latent or overt homosexuals.'⁷⁷² *Ebony* warned that blacks 'turning' to homosexuality were also turning against the moral vision of black pioneers such as Douglass, Truth and Tubman, by negating the importance of sex 'for the procreation of the race.'⁷⁷³

Just as Bennett's production of a patrilineal black history can be connected to his role as a prominent black male historian, so too were the contributions of Poussaint and other 'black family experts' reinforced by their heteronormativity. In 1972 *Ebony* featured Poussaint in an article profiling 'ten outstanding single men', which singled him out as a catch 'women can dream about.' As well as noting his credentials as a bachelor, the feature also praised Poussaint's frequent contributions to *Ebony*, and stressed his importance as one of America's 'few authorities on black internecine problems'.⁷⁷⁴ Several years later Poussaint would be featured alongside his wife Ann Ashmore

⁷⁶⁹ Kevin Mumford, "Untangling Pathology," 68.

⁷⁷⁰ Poussaint, "Blacks and the Sexual Revolution," *Ebony*, October 1971, 116; Poussaint, "Sex and the Black Male," *Ebony*, August 1972, 118.

⁷⁷¹ Robert Staples, "Has the Sexual Revolution Bypassed Blacks?," *Ebony*, April 1974, 112.

⁷⁷² Winston E. Moore, "How to End Sex Problems in our Prisons," *Ebony*, November 1976, 83-84.

⁷⁷³ Staples, "Has the Sexual Revolution Bypassed Blacks?," 112; Martin Weston, "The Ship of AME Zion Rides a Freedom Tide," *Ebony*, November 1976, 80.

⁷⁷⁴ "Ten Outstanding Single Men," *Ebony*, August 1972, 91.

Poussaint as one of black America's 'most exciting couples.'⁷⁷⁵ The rise of the heterosexual 'black family expert' in *Ebony* can be read as part of a broader trend toward co-authored works by black professional couples during the post-civil rights years, which defended and celebrated the heteronormative black family, and bemoaned the turn away from normative gender roles within black America.⁷⁷⁶

While Bennett largely avoided the question of homosexuality in his coverage of black history, his heterosexist depiction of the black past can be argued to have reinforced more emphatic attempts to pathologise homosexuality within the black community, and position queer black identities as a threat to the cultural capital 'acquired by assimilation and protest.'⁷⁷⁷ In the absence of a historical critique of black sexuality, the responsibility of addressing the relationship between black history and sexuality fell on the magazine's audience.⁷⁷⁸ Readers such as Harold Washington contended that homosexuality within the black community was merely the latest effort in a white supremacist project to turn 'the black man into a woman and the black woman into a man.' He argued that a perceived rise in black homosexuality during the 1970s was evidence that this project was succeeding, 'to the obvious detriment

⁷⁷⁵ "Ten of America's Most Exciting Black Couples," *Ebony*, November 1979, 78.

⁷⁷⁶ Perhaps best embodied by Nathan and Julia Hare, this group also included Andrew and Amy Billingsley, James and Lois Horton, and Elmer and Joanne Martin. Andrew Billingsley and Amy Tate Billingsley, *Black Families in White America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968); James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); Elmer P. Martin and Joanne M. Martin, *The Black Extended Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Morton, "Mistakes Black Men Make Relating to Black Women," *Ebony*, December 1975, 170; Norment, 'How Important is Sex in Marriage?', *Ebony*, July 1978, 112; Joanne Tyson and Robert Tyson, "Sexuality and the New Generation," *Ebony*, August 1978, 107.

⁷⁷⁷ Mumford, "Untangling Pathology," 54.

⁷⁷⁸ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, April 1971, 21; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, May 1973, 14; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, June 1974, 21-22; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, April 1976, 16-17; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1977, 20.

of black liberation.⁷⁷⁹ By contrast, other readers looked to draw historical comparisons between the struggle for civil rights among black and gay Americans, contending that ‘the current historical period is comparable for gay people to the lynch era in black history.’⁷⁸⁰

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, *Ebony*’s historical content during the 1960s and 1970s can be seen to have both complicated and consolidated a patrilineal vision of black history. Through individual articles, Bennett looked to celebrate the achievements of radical black women such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. However, the broader remit of his articles and series were bound by a deference to the role of black male pioneers. Relatedly, *Ebony*’s coverage of black history was often predicated on a heteronormative vision of black life which failed to consider the unique burden levied on queer black individuals throughout history. As a result, although Bennett’s writing largely ignored discussion of homosexuality and nonheteronormative black identities, this served to complement more explicit attacks on homosexuality by Black Power activists and the magazine’s own ‘black family experts’ during the 1960s and 1970s.

The parameters of Bennett’s black history coverage did not emerge from a vacuum; they were actively shaped by his own historical experience and education, the editorial environment within which he worked, and the individual and institutional relationships he formed both inside and outside JPC. Similarly, while his articles had a powerful impact as individual projects, they also served to influence, and at times reinforce, more problematic contributions to the

⁷⁷⁹ “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, January 1973, 20.

⁷⁸⁰ “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, July 1973, 11.

magazine from figures such as Alvin Poussaint. In addition, Bennett's articles had a significant influence on the turn toward black history by the magazine's advertisers. In taking their cue from the magazine's historical coverage, many of *Ebony's* advertisers reified its gendered representation of the black past. As we shall see in the next chapter, the attempts of advertisers to commemorate black history in *Ebony* became increasingly more sophisticated, and contested, as the 1970s progressed.

CHAPTER 5:

No Place Like Home: Black History, Heritage Tourism and the Bicentennial

Whether as a way to mediate apparent splits within the civil rights and Black Power movements, or as a means to deflect criticisms of its broader content, *Ebony's* coverage of black history frequently served as a unifying editorial device. During the 1970s, this function would expand to address not merely splits in the movement, but a black community increasingly separated by class and geography. *Ebony* contended that for a suburbanising black middle class, black history, in the guise of heritage tourism, would allow them to get back to their roots and re-energise their commitment to less fortunate African Americans. From a different perspective, travel, both geographically and historically, offered working class black urban communities a route out of the ghetto.⁷⁸¹ This sentiment was taken up by a range of travel providers, who sought to celebrate black history and heritage tourism as tools to help mend 'the social and cultural fissures racism left between African Americans in the USA and the rest of the nation and world.'⁷⁸²

The different ways in which *Ebony's* advertisers, editors and readers attempted to link travel and heritage tourism to overriding debates about racial uplift, equality and national identity coalesced around the celebration of the American Bicentennial during the mid-1970s. The struggle over whether to celebrate or denigrate the Bicentennial in *Ebony* reflected broader ambivalences over the anniversary's commemoration within the black community. Furthermore, the magazine's ambiguous engagement with the

⁷⁸¹ "A Visit to China," *Ebony*, December 1973, 77; "Flight Unlimited," *Ebony*, October 1971, 123.

⁷⁸² Tammy S. Gordon, "'Take Amtrak to Black History': Marketing Heritage Tourism to African Americans in the 1970s," *Journal of Tourism History* (2015): 1, accessed 17 August 2015, doi: 10.1080/1755182X.2015.1047804.

Bicentennial highlighted how black history became a central part of contrasting and often conflicting editorial, corporate and political projects during the 1970s. For Bennett, the Bicentennial was 'an affront to truth and freedom' which distracted from pervasive attacks on affirmative action and the continuing failure to enact major structural and legislative change.⁷⁸³ But for many of the magazine's advertisers, the Bicentennial provided an opportunity to promote new narratives of American citizenship, black history and corporate responsibility.

Which Way Black America?

Anxieties regarding the fragmentation of collective black activism in the aftermath of King's death in 1968 were explicitly addressed in *Ebony's* 1970 special issue 'Which Way Black America?' Faced with an apparent choice between separation, integration or liberation, Johnson argued that American mass media had helped to foster a sense of disunity among black activists by providing a diverse array of black leaders and pseudo-leaders with a platform, even if they spoke 'for almost no-one but themselves.'⁷⁸⁴ The publisher's words were directed primarily toward an apparent proliferation of black political and ideological expression, which became part of American media attempts to mediate the backlash to King's death.⁷⁸⁵ However, as the issue's cover – a photo montage of black life superimposed over a geographical outline of the United States – made clear, this sense of fragmentation also related to the growing physical distances between different sections of the black community.

The Great Migration out of the South, which lasted from around the first decade of the twentieth century into the 1970s, had radically changed the

⁷⁸³ Bennett, "An Adamant 'No'," *Ebony*, August 1975, 40.

⁷⁸⁴ "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1970, 33.

⁷⁸⁵ Heitner, *Black Power TV*, 6.

geography of black America.⁷⁸⁶ At the start of this period, nine out of ten blacks lived in the South. By its endpoint, nearly half of all black Americans would be living outside of the South.⁷⁸⁷ Out of such seismic demographic shifts emerged changes that were no less dramatic on a local and regional scale. The gains of the civil rights movement and the impact of urban decline had led to 'black flight' from the inner city which mirrored the out-migration of white Americans.⁷⁸⁸ Andrew Weise has argued that the transition of middle class blacks out of historically black enclaves from the 1960s onwards represents one of the 'most important demographic movements' of the twentieth century.⁷⁸⁹ For JPC, this shift was reflected by a move into a new custom built headquarters on the South Loop in 1971, which continued the company's slow retreat away from its roots in the South Side's historic black business district.⁷⁹⁰

However, the increasing mobility of more affluent blacks contrasted with the fortunes of working class inner city African Americans, and meant that the lived experiences of lower and middle class blacks during the 1970s became 'qualitatively different and dramatically more divergent.'⁷⁹¹ This was exacerbated by public policy debates into the urban crisis, which, by the end of the 1960s, had come to equate the decline of the inner city with racial conflict and ghetto pathology.⁷⁹² In his 1965 report, Moynihan had warned that 'the

⁷⁸⁶ Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America: the Four Great Migrations* (New York: Viking, 2010), 1-4.

⁷⁸⁷ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Random House, 2010, 10.

⁷⁸⁸ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 5-7.

⁷⁸⁹ Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2

⁷⁹⁰ "Ebony Magazine's New Home," *Ebony*, September 1972, 84-137; JPC Office Guide, Box 1, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁷⁹¹ Susan Diane Toliver, *Black Families in Corporate America* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998), 7-8.

⁷⁹² Wendell E. Pritchett, "Which Urban Crisis? Regionalism, Race, and Urban Policy, 1960-1974," *Journal of Urban History* 34 (2008): 266.

present generation of Negro youth growing up in the urban ghettos has probably less personal contact with the white world' than any generation in history.⁷⁹³ These 'warring symbols of urban crisis and suburban accomplishment' emerged as central paradoxes of the African American experience during the second half of the twentieth century.⁷⁹⁴

Aware that such developments could have serious ramifications for *Ebony's* position as a general interest publication, Johnson sponsored a series of demographic studies by prominent market researchers such as Daniel Starch and Daniel Yankelovich.⁷⁹⁵ *Ebony* claimed the outcomes of such studies as evidence that each issue of the magazine represented 'a microcosm of black America.'⁷⁹⁶ However, even prior to King's assassination editors such as Alex Poinsett had suggested that two roads were emerging in America – a high road which lead 'from well-kept homes, through well-financed schools to colleges and universities, then on to a lucrative life in the suburbs', and a low road which meandered 'out of racial ghettos, through dark and ageing classrooms and then back to the dismal slums.'⁷⁹⁷ *Ebony's* readers feared that outmigration to the suburbs would leave blacks 'marooned in a wasteland rendered politically, economically, educationally and ecologically impotent.'⁷⁹⁸ Yet *Ebony* warned that the suburbs were hardly a cure-all for black sojourners, and were frequently even more segregated than the inner city.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹³ Moynihan, "The Negro Family."

⁷⁹⁴ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 259.

⁷⁹⁵ "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1968, 29; JPC News Release, 29 May 1973, Box 1, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁷⁹⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, May 1969, 28; "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1975, 25; "Backstage," *Ebony*, June 1980, 30.

⁷⁹⁷ Poinsett, "Computer Tutors for Ghetto Pupils," *Ebony*, December 1967, 91.

⁷⁹⁸ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, October 1971, 24.

⁷⁹⁹ Pierce, "Crime in the Suburbs," *Ebony*, August 1965, 167; "Will the Suburbs Beckon?," *Ebony*, July 1971, 112.

The respective dangers of the ghetto and the suburb can be seen through *Ebony's* contrasting depiction of two youths in its 1974 special 'The Black Child.' First, Peter Bailey profiled 12 year old Wendell 'Tad' Perry at his family's expansive suburban home in Chevy Chase.⁸⁰⁰ Bailey noted that being one of only a handful of black students at his junior high school had not dampened Wendell's enthusiasm for learning, or participating in the 'very suburban activities' of tennis, archery and croquet. Yet when asked what he knew about a number of prominent black leaders and historical figures, Wendell admitted that he had only heard of around half of them.⁸⁰¹ Bailey used this to support the idea that moving to the suburbs or 'making it' was equivalent to 'selling out' or forgetting their roots – a common accusation levied at middle class black families.

A very different image of black childhood was presented through Carlyle Douglas' article 'A Child of the Streets.' Charles White was the leader of a New York street gang, a 'rebellious and resentful schoolboy' who became transformed on the streets into a 'stern disciplinarian.'⁸⁰² Although from seemingly different worlds, Wendell and Charles were united by a sense of loneliness rooted in a dislocation from a shared racial history. Wendell was isolated by his life in a predominantly white suburb where black history was rarely taught, whilst White's appreciation of black history was limited by his socioeconomic position and inadequate education. White admitted that he was 'tired of beating kids up and taking their money', and Douglas noted his hidden passion for art. Conversely, Bailey expressed concern that Wendell

⁸⁰⁰ Bailey, "An 'Integrated' Youngster," *Ebony*, August 1974, 123.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸⁰² Carlyle Douglas, "A Child of the Streets," *Ebony*, August 1974, 132.

demonstrated little interest in his father's extensive collection of African art, suggesting his disinterest was connected to his suburban exile.⁸⁰³

For *Ebony*, these two young black boys embodied contrasting perils of the post-civil rights black experience. On the one hand, Wendell's story demonstrated that black suburbanisation risked cutting upwardly mobile blacks off from the communities and histories which had provided the platform for more personal successes. On the other hand, it was no coincidence that *Ebony* had focused on White's interest in art. His namesake Charles White had become the first artist commissioned for an *Ebony* cover, with his historical rendering of the black woman adorning the magazine's 1966 special.⁸⁰⁴ Douglas suggested that White's interest in art could help foster a closer connection to his own heritage, and consequently provide a route out of the ghetto. More broadly, *Ebony* declared that the weight of racial history meant that blacks of all ages 'had (and still have) a common bond – their blackness.'⁸⁰⁵

Old Illusions and New Souths

One way in which *Ebony* looked to negotiate these intersections of geography, history, and black identity was through the image of the 'New South.' During Reconstruction, southern reformers such as Henry Grady had used the concept of a 'New South' to call for a revolution in social and technological values, and a rejection of the plantation economy of the antebellum period. Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act, *Ebony* championed the role of Fannie Lou Hamer and other black women who were 'builders of a New South', and pointed to the potential rise of a black dominated

⁸⁰³ Ibid., 136.

⁸⁰⁴ Robinson, "Portrayer of Black Dignity," *Ebony*, July 1967, 34.

⁸⁰⁵ "Let's Not Waste It Again," *Ebony*, May 1976, 144.

third party movement as an important new trend for southern black politics.⁸⁰⁶ However, this image of a 'New South' also carried more conservative political implications, as the breakdown of the New Deal coalition and widespread resistance to desegregation fed into a realignment of southern politics and the fragmentation of the 'Solid South.'⁸⁰⁷

Ebony's discussion of these competing visions of the 'New South' was formalised through its 1971 special on 'The South Today', which juxtaposed images of the region's past and present on its cover. An underlying black and white sketch taken from an article in Bennett's 'Negro History' series depicted a slave coffle marching down the streets of Washington, D.C.⁸⁰⁸ Superimposed over the top of this sketch was a colour image of young black professionals and students staring defiantly into the camera, with one man giving the Black Power salute. The scene was set for a new engagement with the South by northern blacks whose parents had left the South during the first half of the twentieth century. As the gains of the civil rights years began to democratise the region, Johnson suggested that many blacks 'are looking back to the land of their birth. They are wondering what the South is really like today. In this issue, we are trying to tell them.'⁸⁰⁹

In keeping with *Ebony's* editorial prerogative, the 1971 special provided a predominantly positive vision of regional advancement through articles such as 'Black Business is Tops in South', 'Atlanta - Mecca of the South' and 'South of

⁸⁰⁶ Douglas, "Black Politics in the New South," *Ebony*, January 1971, 27; Garland, "Builders of a New South," *Ebony*, August 1966, 27; Pierce, "The Mission of Marian Wright," *Ebony*, June 1966, 95.

⁸⁰⁷ Dean J. Kotlowski, *Nixon's Civil Rights: Politics, Principle and Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 19-21; Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011), 7-9.

⁸⁰⁸ Bennett, "Behind the Cotton Curtain," 83.

⁸⁰⁹ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1971, 33.

Freedom - 1971.⁸¹⁰ This image was tempered by Bennett, who pointed to a host of obstacles such as the South's deep-seated racism, and a troubling turn toward conservative racial politics. From this perspective, the image of the 'New South' was an extension of the Second Reconstruction which 'gives new meaning to the failures and promises of the past.' Just as southern history could provide blacks with a sense of their own cultural history, Bennett warned that appeals to romanticised images of southern history and the region's 'infinite capacity for deluding itself with myths and lies.' could detract from the region's entrenched white supremacy.⁸¹¹

In an article titled 'Old Illusions and New Souths', the historian envisioned the New South of the seventies as merely the latest in a long line of 'New Souths' stretching back to the First Reconstruction: 'New South after New South – the New South of Henry Grady and Booker T. Washington, the New South of the New Deal, [and] the New South of the post-World War II period.'⁸¹² Each of these experiments had failed; either stymied by the weakness of the North and the backwardness of the South, or distorted by nostalgic visions of the 'Old South' in American literature and folklore. The success, or failure, of the newest 'New South' would rest on a recognition of its continuities, not its differences, from the South's longer history. Bennett declared that racism remained a cornerstone of southern politics and society. He reminded readers that the region could not be fully understood 'without reference to the white man's ancient and consuming passion to keep black people down.'⁸¹³

⁸¹⁰ Booker, "Black Business is Tops in South," *Ebony*, August 1971, 56; Garland, "Atlanta – Mecca of the South," *Ebony*, August 1971, 152; Rowan, "South of Freedom – 1971," *Ebony*, August 1971, 134.

⁸¹¹ Bennett, "Old Illusions and New Souths," *Ebony*, August 1971, 37.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, 36.

Yet while Bennett argued that the 'New South' of the late 1960s and early 1970s remained rooted in white privilege and societal control, other elements of *Ebony's* content celebrated the liberatory potential of a post-civil rights, post-segregation South. A major example of this was through the transformation of the southern tourism industry, as the impact of civil rights legislation led to the region opening up to black tourists. *Ebony* claimed that black travellers were now protected by federal and state anti-discrimination laws, and that although provincial areas and 'small establishments on back roads' should still be avoided, black travellers now faced a markedly different welcome.⁸¹⁴ As early as the magazine's annual vacation guide in 1966, its editors optimistically declared that the 'nightmares of yesterday's travel' were over.⁸¹⁵ Against the backdrop of anxieties over the future of the movement, black tourism appeared a potential route back to black collectivism and group solidarity. Accordingly, by the end of the 1960s *Ebony's* promotion of black travel had become increasingly directed by a politics of nostalgia which presented an engagement with heritage tourism as a continuation of the struggle for civil rights.

In its annual vacation guide of 1969, which focused on Louisiana's Gulf Coast, *Ebony* admitted that travel to the South could prove to be a painful experience. Underneath the calmness so hard to find in the hustle and bustle of northern cities, *Ebony* warned that the South was 'where much of it took place: the suffering, the humiliating experiences, the bloodshed, [and] the black revolt.'⁸¹⁶ However, for black tourists from outside the region, the public face of the former Confederacy now appeared to be one with 'a warm smile and a

⁸¹⁴ "Annual Vacation Guide," *Ebony*, June 1968, 186.

⁸¹⁵ "Annual Vacation Guide," *Ebony*, June 1966, 39.

⁸¹⁶ "Annual Vacation Guide," *Ebony*, June 1969, 148

welcome' for northern black dollars. Leonard Burns, the chairman of the executive committee of the Louisiana State Development Commission, noted that southern white businessmen had been reading travel industry and trade reports, and had learned that the black tourist industry was a multi-billion dollar business.⁸¹⁷

The importance of homecoming was rearticulated on a broader scale in 1974, where *Ebony's* annual vacation guide implored readers to 'go back home' for their summer vacation. The magazine celebrated the emergence of the 'New South' which beckoned Northerners 'who are tired of big city ghettos and unfulfilled hopes and dreams' to experience familiar southern comforts.⁸¹⁸ With the passage of federal civil rights legislation and the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in public accommodation and transport, *Ebony* reassured readers that 'blacks have gained greater freedom of movement and can 'rediscover' their own country without hindrance or embarrassment.' It offered a sharp visual juxtaposition of a pre and post-civil rights South – the black southern experience prior to the civil rights movement envisioned through an image of an impoverished Mississippi farmhouse, whereas the possibilities of the 'New South' were shown through a picture of two glamorous black models walking along the beach at a coastal resort, and another image showing two black women enjoying themselves on a high-end golf course.

This rediscovery of black heritage quickly stretched to other regions. By the early 1970s *Ebony* was imploring its readers to 'do yourself proud: discover black history', with a guide that listed 43 sites of historical importance for black Americans in the East, South, Midwest and Far West. The magazine prompted

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁸¹⁸ "Go Back Home For Your 1974 Vacation," *Ebony*, May 1974, 142.

readers to visit sites that stood as 'stubborn reminders of the full richness and diversity of black American history.'⁸¹⁹ *Ebony* also began to offer in-depth reviews of popular sites such as the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Washington, D.C., which had been taken over by the federal government in 1963 and added to the National Registry of Historic Houses.⁸²⁰ *Ebony* informed its readers that 'to step into a man's home is to share an important part of his life and now the world can, once again, share in the life of famed statesmen, abolitionist and civil rights pioneer Frederick Douglass.'⁸²¹ From this perspective, an appreciation of the life of prominent black pioneers and civil rights activists became a direct intervention in the continuing struggle for racial equality.

This sentiment also helped to promote the benefits of black tourism across class lines. In its 1969 coverage of the Gulf Coast, *Ebony* had acknowledged that while black tourists now appeared to be welcomed into the region, little had changed for less affluent southern blacks 'who still live in the Coast towns and have to deal every day with the people and the places.'⁸²² To alleviate this tension, *Ebony* contended that black tourists visiting the South were not only bolstering the coffers of predominantly white businesses and travel agents, but were also contributing to the region's integration. The magazine encouraged readers to visit the area for their own enjoyment, with the added benefit that their presence served to flood the area with new and different black bodies. As a result, black tourists to the South could help out their less

⁸¹⁹ "Annual Vacation Guide," *Ebony*, June 1972, 176.

⁸²⁰ Jinping Wu, *Frederick Douglass and the Black Liberation Movement: the North Star of Black Americans* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 4.

⁸²¹ "A Share In The Life Of Frederick Douglass," *Ebony*, June 1972, 76.

⁸²² "Annual Vacation Guide," *Ebony*, June 1969, 150.

fortunate southern 'brothers' and the region's other residents 'get used to the idea of enjoying, together, the pleasures of the South.'⁸²³

America Up Close, From Sea To Shining Sea

While Bennett's vision of the New South in the seventies connected it to a historical cycle stretching back to the First Reconstruction, the 1971 special also hinted at important ways in which this 'newest New South' differed from those which had preceded it. Bennett had drawn the attention of his readers to the vast numbers of southern blacks who had utilised the 'power of locomotion' to migrate out of the South since the turn of the twentieth century. In the years following the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, this mobility became rearticulated as an important symbol of black advancement. Travel providers moved from actively discriminating against African Americans, to promoting themselves as a vehicle for black consumers to discover their racial heritage. As American Oil declared in *Ebony's* 1970 special: 'this vacation, don't just travel in distance, go back in time. Back to the scene of some important events in American history – Black American history.'⁸²⁴

Just as *Ebony* endorsed the intra-racial benefits of black tourism, travel providers looked to connect history, travel, and the celebration of racial identity across class lines within the black community. The wholesale appeal of black heritage to travel companies is striking, given how class bifurcation in the 1970s reinforced specific target audiences. Disparities in automobile ownership meant that lower class blacks remained a disproportionately large market for bus

⁸²³ Ibid., 148.

⁸²⁴ "Discover Black America," *Ebony*, August 1970, 20-21.

companies such as Greyhound.⁸²⁵ By contrast, the impact of civil rights legislation and the expansion of the black middle class 'created' a profitable new market for airline companies, while the energy crisis of the 1970s and continued government regulation ensured prices remained high.⁸²⁶ However, through engaging with black history in different ways – whether through promoting black heritage as a vehicle for racial uplift, or presenting a more indulgent and diasporic vision of the black past – travel providers demonstrated how their utilisation of black history intersected class and economic lines.

Perhaps no corporation illustrated the efforts of travel companies to endear themselves to black consumers during the 1960s and 1970s more than the Greyhound Corporation. For much of the twentieth century, Greyhound had proved to be an enthusiastic supporter of segregation in the South.⁸²⁷ The company had featured prominently in early challenges to Jim Crow travel restrictions, including the landmark Supreme Court case of *Morgan v. Virginia* in 1946.⁸²⁸ Wary of a backlash, the company circulated internal memos which gave broad guidelines for accepting Jim Crow regulations, but warned drivers against using force in handling passengers who challenged segregation.⁸²⁹ However, the Freedom Rides of 1961 proved a major blow to Greyhound's corporate image, with photographs of a burning Greyhound bus near Anniston

⁸²⁵ Carlton Jackson, *Hounds of the Road: a History of the Greyhound Bus Company* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press), 110.

⁸²⁶ The Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 led to a long-term decline in the average cost of air travel. Daniel L. Rust, *Flying Across America: the Airline Passenger Experience* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 177-179.

⁸²⁷ Wright, *Sharing the Prize*, 54.

⁸²⁸ Arsenault, *Freedom Riders*, 13; Derek Catsam, *Freedom's Main Line: the Journey of Reconciliation and the Freedom Rides* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 15.

⁸²⁹ Tracey E. K'Meyer, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 37.

in Alabama indelibly linking the company to racist violence.⁸³⁰ Robert Kennedy's subsequent criticism of the company, alongside damning reports of Greyhound's exclusionary hiring practices, placed immense pressure on the company to reform its public image.⁸³¹ In response, Greyhound sought to demonstrate that it 'wanted to serve the Negro, and contribute to his welfare, and show that it was not just another self-seeking, opportunistic company intent upon exploiting them.'⁸³²

A major part of this strategy involved securing the services of a highly visible black spokesman, and in 1962 Greyhound recruited ex-Brooklyn Dodger pitcher Joe Black as a 'Special Market's Representative.' Black would quickly become an influential advertising figurehead, creating a syndicated advertising column which appeared in *Ebony* and a number of other black magazines and newspapers.⁸³³ Black's success in expanding the company's reach and appeal to minority communities led to him becoming a vice-president of the Special Markets division in 1969.⁸³⁴ In this role he oversaw an array of new advertising series from Greyhound which looked to attract black consumers in various ways.⁸³⁵

Greyhound also looked to formalise its corporate links with JPC, and cemented its role as the 'official' mode of transport for the *Ebony* Fashion Fair. By the early 1970s Greyhound was running adverts in *Ebony* celebrating its role

⁸³⁰ Phil Noble, *Beyond the Burning Bus: the Civil Rights Revolution in a Southern Town* (Montgomery: NewSouth Books, 2003), 33; Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002), 42.

⁸³¹ "Greyhound Negro Drive Countdown," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 6 July 1961, 1; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and his Times* (New York: First Mariner Books, 2002), 296.

⁸³² Jackson, *Hounds of the Road*, 109.

⁸³³ Steven M. Selzer, *Meet the Real Joe Black* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2010), 109.

⁸³⁴ "Joe Black named Senior Vice Pres. of Greyhound," *Jet*, 4 August 1986, 6; Young, "The Athlete in Business," *Ebony*, December 1970, 109.

⁸³⁵ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, February 1971, 10; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, July 1971, 9; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, February 1972, 9; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, August 1972, 9.

in carrying 'the world's most beautiful black models to cities and towns from coast to coast.'⁸³⁶ This connection was further strengthened in 1974, when Johnson was elected to the Greyhound board of directors.⁸³⁷ To supplement its programme of mass advertising across black newspapers and magazines, and black oriented television and radio, Greyhound financed a number of market studies to assess its market penetration within black communities. In 1975 one such study declared that over recent years 'the black population has emerged as a dynamic and viable market...recognizing the expanding role of the black community, Greyhound has continually increased its advertising specifically directed to black people.'⁸³⁸

The wording of this study is illustrative of Greyhound's broader strategy toward black consumers, which was predicated on distancing its post-civil rights position from its deeply segregated history. Certainly, the estimated expenditure of black Americans had increased significantly over the fifteen years between 1960 and 1973 – from around \$30 billion to nearly \$70 billion – but the position of black consumers as a 'dynamic and viable market' was hardly a new one.⁸³⁹ In presenting the emergence of the black consumer as a 'recent' phenomenon, Greyhound looked to deny a history of black consumption, and therefore minimise the impact of its own historical disregard for black customers. By contrast, Greyhound turned to black history as a key strategy for celebrating black consumption and the celebration of black citizenship through travel. Adverts invited readers to 'stake their claim' on the land, noting that everything

⁸³⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, February 1963, 20; "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1963, 23;

"Greyhound," *Ebony*, October 1971, 49; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, November 1971, 8

⁸³⁷ "Johnson Named to Greyhound Board," *Chicago Defender*, 23 February 1974, 4; "Johnson on Board," *Tri-State Defender*, 2 March 1974, 14.

⁸³⁸ Jackson, *Hounds of the Road*, 110-111.

⁸³⁹ Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society* (Boston: South End Press), 158.

between the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts was 'Greyhound country – that makes it your country to travel in.'⁸⁴⁰

Such claims were located within a conciliatory and patriotic rhetoric of racial uplift through geographic mobility which proclaimed that 'Greyhound's America is out there waiting. America the beautiful. America up close, from sea to shining sea.'⁸⁴¹ From this perspective, Greyhound offered not a reminder of a segregated history of public transport, but a route to racial equality and citizenship. Accordingly, the company's adverts served as a shorthand for the new opportunities available to black travellers on a national scale, 'because Greyhound *is* America on wheels!'⁸⁴² In the post-civil rights travel market, Greyhound could therefore function as a 'picture window on America...a living, breathing lesson in geography and history.'⁸⁴³ A key aspect of this role was Greyhound's ability to help African Americans rediscover important black heritage sites across the nation. As its adverts proudly declared by the early 1970s, Greyhound wasn't just the 'skyscraper bus' or the 'let's-go-camping bus'; it was also the 'Crispus Attucks Monument bus' and the 'B.T Washington-Tuskegee bus.'⁸⁴⁴

A Real Experience: *Ebony*, Black History, and the Aviation Industry

As Greyhound transformed its approach to the black consumer during the 1960s and early 1970s, it provided an important case study for other travel providers to follow suit. This was particularly apparent within the American aviation industry, as major airlines looked to distance themselves from the long

⁸⁴⁰ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, July 1970, 9; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, November 1970, 11.

⁸⁴¹ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, January 1975, 10.

⁸⁴² "Greyhound," *Ebony*, July 1971, 9.

⁸⁴³ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, April 1968, 9; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, August 1968, 9.

⁸⁴⁴ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, April 1972, 11; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, June 1972, 9.

history of segregated commercial flight. While Jim Crow laws had not originally been intended for application on commercial air travel, during the 1940s and 1950s resistance to desegregation was as prevalent in the air as it was on the ground.⁸⁴⁵ African Americans who travelled by air routinely faced discriminatory treatment such as restricted seating options, or being forced to sit in separate rows to white passengers. American Airlines even trained ticketing agents to mark tickets purchased by blacks with a special code to ensure they were segregated on-board its aircraft.⁸⁴⁶ Such widespread prejudices, coupled with the frequently prohibitive cost of airline travel, meant that black passengers were rarely seen on commercial flights prior to the 1960s.⁸⁴⁷

These restrictions applied to employees as well as passengers. The first black pilot wasn't employed by a commercial airline until the late 1950s when New York Airways hired helicopter pilot and Tuskegee veteran Perry Young, Jr.⁸⁴⁸ Following his appointment Young became a minor celebrity, and would go on to appear as an advertising spokesman for products such as cigarettes and razors in *Ebony* during the early 1960s.⁸⁴⁹ However, a decision by the U.S Supreme Court in 1963 opened up major American airlines to black pilots and flight attendants.⁸⁵⁰ *Ebony* celebrated flight stewardesses such as Alice Joyce Williams and Marlene White who had 'crashed the color line' and taken a stand

⁸⁴⁵ Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: the Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 86-87.

⁸⁴⁶ Victoria Vantoch, *The Jet Set: Airline Stewardesses and the Making of an American Icon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 63.

⁸⁴⁷ Lewis M. Killian, *Black and White: Reflections of a Southern White Sociologist* (Oxford: General Hall, 1994), 94.

⁸⁴⁸ Flint Whitlock, "Racial Discrimination Against Pilots: an Historical Perspective," in *Ethical Issues in Aviation*, ed. Elizabeth A. Hoppe (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 137-144.

⁸⁴⁹ "Schick," *Ebony*, December 1962, 5; "Viceroy," *Ebony*, October 1961, 118.

⁸⁵⁰ Betty Kaplan Gubert, Miriam Sawyer and Caroline M. Fannin, *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science* (Westport: Oryx Press, 2002), xiv-xv.

against the 'Jim-Crow-ridden U.S airline industry.'⁸⁵¹ Similarly, it profiled pilots like Marlon Green and David Harris, who had secured jobs at major airlines such as Continental.⁸⁵²

Ebony's editors regularly positioned its own inclusion on major airlines as an important breakthrough for civil rights. The magazine implored readers to 'ask for *Ebony* when you settle down for a long flight. Your asking may speed the day when we are all on major airlines.'⁸⁵³ Johnson played an important role in this process, working hard to secure contracts with domestic and international carriers, and looking to publicly shame airlines which did not accept copies of his magazines.⁸⁵⁴ At points this approach backfired, with Johnson forced to apologise to Braniff International Airways for contending that the airline did not provide *Ebony* for its passengers.⁸⁵⁵ Braniff argued that the only reason copies of *Ebony* might not be found on board its aircraft was due to passengers 'borrowing' them, and asserted that 'while we don't condone dishonesty, it still makes us feel a little proud when readers get so engrossed in an *Ebony* article on a plane that they carry the magazine along with them when they depart.'⁸⁵⁶

Similarly, as the industry began to open up for both black employees and passengers, airline advertising followed suit. By the second half of the sixties airlines such as TWA were regular advertisers in *Ebony*, using integrated advertising campaigns to stress their deference to black consumers, and the

⁸⁵¹ "Negro Progress in 1962," *Ebony*, January 1963, 87; "Open Skies For Negro Girls," *Ebony*, June 1963, 43.

⁸⁵² "Breakthrough on the Airlines," *Ebony*, November 1965, 113.

⁸⁵³ "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1969, 32.

⁸⁵⁴ "Backstage," *Ebony*, February 1970, 22.

⁸⁵⁵ John Johnson to John Kersey, 16 February 1970, Box 10, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; John Kersey to John Johnson, 13 February 1970, Box 10, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁸⁵⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, April 1970, 27.

personal success and professional competency of their black employees.⁸⁵⁷ During the early 1970s Delta Airlines adopted this approach through a series which offered profiles of individual black employees from across the company's marketing, administrative, and flight teams.⁸⁵⁸ United Airlines went one step further, using adverts in *Ebony* to announce the arrival of a new custom travel service for black passengers called the 'Something Special' desk, which ensured black travellers a space to get 'straight talk on what United has to offer the Black community.'⁸⁵⁹

Just as Greyhound had utilised black history to endear itself to black consumers, an array of American airline companies turned to the past to promote air travel at home and overseas. For international travel, airlines tapped into appeals to black internationalism and pan-Africanism which been popularised by activists such as Amiri Baraka and Maulana Karenga.⁸⁶⁰ Eastern Airlines invited African Americans to 'discover home in a place you've never been', with routes to the Caribbean and Africa. The airline implored readers to 'get into the music. And the people. Get into *your* people. And you may get into yourself.'⁸⁶¹ Similarly, TWA advertised the appeal of 'black Europe' to *Ebony's* readers, which promised to take tourists to 'a Europe rich in Black History. Alive with Black Culture.'⁸⁶²

This message was reinforced by International carriers such as Ethiopian Airlines, which celebrated its role in providing black American tourists with 'the

⁸⁵⁷ "TWA," *Ebony*, December 1966, 151; "TWA," *Ebony*, March 1967, 71; "TWA," *Ebony*, March 1968, 10.

⁸⁵⁸ "Delta," *Ebony*, March 1971, 52; "Delta," *Ebony*, June 1971, 12; "Delta," *Ebony*, July 1971, 12; "Delta," *Ebony*, November 1971, 151.

⁸⁵⁹ "United," *Ebony*, November 1972, 12.

⁸⁶⁰ Poinsett, "It's Nation Time!," *Ebony*, December 1970, 99; Michael Simanga, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People: History and Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁸⁶¹ "Eastern," *Ebony*, May 1970, 117.

⁸⁶² "TWA," *Ebony*, March 1972, 14.

key to the Hidden Empire' of Africa.⁸⁶³ Another international carrier to adopt this approach was Air Afrique, which tapped into Black Power's cultural nationalism to promote itself as 'black-owned, black operated and beautiful.' The airline suggested that 'the moment you step aboard Air Afrique, you know you're with family.'⁸⁶⁴ American Airlines followed suit, promoting routes to St. Thomas, Haiti and other Caribbean destinations by contending that 'some foreign places aren't so foreign.' For the children of black travellers, the airline promised 'trees to climb, horses to ride, and plenty of native children to teach them about a different Black culture.'⁸⁶⁵

Furthermore, through absorbing black history and culture in the Caribbean and other locations, American Airlines suggested that black travellers could return home and educate other blacks who could not afford to travel. 'Get into the island culture', the airline suggested to *Ebony's* readers in 1972, 'and maybe even take a little bit of it home with you.'⁸⁶⁶ This understanding of travel as a form of 'personal responsibility' came to underpin many advertising appeals to the black market, with airlines such as American challenging readers on whether their vacation was merely going to be a few days off, or 'a real experience.' Whether a holiday could qualify as a 'real experience' was linked to visiting black historical sites such as the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, or memorials for important black leaders such as Martin Luther King. Reinforcing the sentiments expressed through *Ebony's* vacation guides, American Airlines suggested that visiting such sites provided important educational and fraternal benefits for the black family. The airline declared that

⁸⁶³ "Ethiopian," *Ebony*, October 1972, 21; "Ethiopian," *Ebony*, November 1972, 28.

⁸⁶⁴ "Air Afrique," *Ebony*, May 1972, 150.

⁸⁶⁵ "American," *Ebony*, June 1972, 179; "American," *Ebony*, July 1972, 12.

⁸⁶⁶ "American," *Ebony*, August 1972, 109.

for children, 'nothing can be more exciting about history than seeing the places where it was made.' Similarly, for black parents, 'nothing could be more rewarding than sharing that excitement.'⁸⁶⁷

Black History and the Bicentennial

For both *Ebony* and its advertisers, the American Bicentennial in the mid-1970s proved to be a key moment around which these disparate debates into heritage tourism history, racial uplift, and black citizenship coalesced. The racially reconciliatory potential of the Bicentennial was just one part of a broader corporate and political vision which positioned the nation's 200th birthday as a moment of calm amid the choppy waters of the 1970s. Against a backdrop of the Watergate scandal, the protracted end to the Vietnam conflict, and the country's attempts to pull itself out of a recession brought about by the 1973 oil crisis and the 1973-1974 stock market crash, a self-reverential celebration of the nation's history carried significant bipartisan appeal.⁸⁶⁸

One part of this attraction stemmed from utilising the social and cultural movements of the 1960s to create a sense of national unity 'precisely through a carefully coordinated showcasing of difference.'⁸⁶⁹ Conversely, even as Bicentennial planners used these movements to promote a sense of 'pluralist nationalism', the anniversary came to function as a historical bookend to the riot and revolt of the 1960s and early 1970s. As John Bodnar has noted, government officials were anxious to use the occasion to reaffirm citizen loyalty 'after a decade of dissent and divisiveness during which governmental

⁸⁶⁷ "American," *Ebony*, June 1974, 71.

⁸⁶⁸ Walter L. Hixson, *Historical Memory and Representations of the Vietnam War* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 306-307.

⁸⁶⁹ Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: the American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 144.

authorities had actually inflicted violence upon some of its youngest and poorest citizens.⁸⁷⁰ David Ryan has reiterated this argument, suggesting that the withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975 encouraged the Ford administration to emphasise 'renewal and rebirth based on a restoration of traditional values and a nostalgic and exclusive reading of the American past.'⁸⁷¹

As part of the Bicentennial celebrations, Gerald Ford announced the federal recognition of Black History Month in February 1976. The president declared that 'in the Bicentennial year of our Independence, we can review with admiration the impressive contributions of black Americans to our national life and culture.'⁸⁷² This proclamation was indicative of the ways in which Bicentennial planners had looked to centralise the theme of 'cultural pluralism', and was part of an open invitation to Americans 'of all races and ethnicities to be part of a new national "mosaic."⁸⁷³ Yet at the same moment, Ford's words positioned this expanded celebration of black history as a point of departure - a moment at which attention could finally shift from the modern civil rights movement to a triumphant retelling of its successes.

In celebrating Black History Month, we can take satisfaction from this recent progress in the realization of the ideals envisioned by our Founding Fathers. But, even more than this, we can seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.⁸⁷⁴

This sentiment was reflected on a local as well as national level. For example, in Detroit, Mayor Coleman Young embraced the Bicentennial

⁸⁷⁰ John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 228.

⁸⁷¹ David Ryan, "Re-enacting Independence through Nostalgia – the 1976 US Bicentennial after the Vietnam War," *Forum for Inter-American Research* 5 (2012): 26.

⁸⁷² Gerald Ford, "Message on the Observance of Black History Month," 10 February 1976, <http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/speeches/760074.htm>

⁸⁷³ Zaretsky, *No Direction Home*, 154.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

celebrations alongside the city's own 275th birthday. By the mid-1970s, Detroit had cemented its position as a poster child for post-industrial decay, white flight and systemic urban inequality.⁸⁷⁵ Young believed the Bicentennial could provide a much needed boost to the city's flagging infrastructure and economy. When Mayor Young's office was asked about what the Bicentennial celebrations had to do with the urban crisis, the answer was 'everything.' A press release from the Mayor's office declared that 'if we can build Detroit as a labor history center and promote it as a tourist attraction we shall have more jobs...the Bicentennial can help build bridges in a polarized city.'⁸⁷⁶

For post-industrial cities in the Rustbelt of the Northeast and Midwest, many of which had significant black populations by the 1970s, the Bicentennial was seen as both an economic opportunity and a moment of racial reconciliation. Northern states and individual cities promoted themselves to the magazine's readers throughout the 1970s, asking those planning a vacation to 'consider surprising St. Louis' or to visit 'Michigan: mirror of America.'⁸⁷⁷ Major new projects such as a 'Bicentennial Black Museum' in Philadelphia sought to celebrate black history as part of the Bicentennial's broader theme of national pride and reconciliation.⁸⁷⁸ In Washington, D.C., organiser Robert Lester justified the \$125 million spent by the federal government on Bicentennial

⁸⁷⁵ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 269.

⁸⁷⁶ "Black Woman to Head Detroit Bicentennial," *Jet*, 4 April 1974, 30; Julie Longo, "Remembering the Renaissance City: Detroit's Bicentennial Homecoming Festival and Urban Redevelopment," *Michigan Historical Review* 32 (2006): 89.

⁸⁷⁷ "Michigan Is For Everybody," *Ebony*, June 1975, 83; "Planning a Vacation?," *Ebony*, May 1972, 16.

⁸⁷⁸ "Black Bicentennial Exhibit," *New York Times*, 30 September 1973, 9; "Black Museum Backed For Bicentennial," *New York Times*, 19 March 1975, 60; Philadelphia 76 Board, 9 April 1976, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

projects by arguing that 'we need to change the image of Washington from that of a crime capital with poverty and corruption, to that of a host city.'⁸⁷⁹

However, many black individuals and organisations were ambivalent about the relevance of the Bicentennial to African Americans, or their role in its commemoration. Head of the National Urban League Vernon Jordan warned that blacks should only take part in the Bicentennial on their own terms, 'and with the goal of adding substance and a black perspective to an event badly in need of both.'⁸⁸⁰ Jordan's concerns echoed those of Bob Nunn, the National Park Service's equal opportunities director, who criticised the 'lack of minority input into the Bicentennial programming' and the tiny percentage of park superintendents who were black.⁸⁸¹ Organisations such as the ASALH also warned that the Bicentennial would 'perpetuate long-standing historical myths' that the civil rights movement had sought to challenge.⁸⁸² These concerns were taken up on a local level by community activists, who sought to critique specific Bicentennial projects and activities.

In Philadelphia, black leaders argued that instead of helping to resolve the urban crisis, vast expenditures on Bicentennial projects merely served to draw important funds away from those in need. The city's Bicentennial plans were derided for creating 'a bonanza' for the city's developers and elite business interests, but failing to provide for 'the third of Philadelphia's

⁸⁷⁹ Margot Hornblower, "No Frills At This Party," *Washington Post*, 8 May 1975, G1.

⁸⁸⁰ "Urban League Pays Bicentennial Tribute to Black Americans," *New York Times*, 17 May 1976, 15.

⁸⁸¹ "Bicentennial Unit To Be Increased," *Afro-American*, 23 September 1972, 17; "Park Service Bicentennial Plans Lagging on Minority Involvement," *Afro-American*, 19 July 1975, 1.

⁸⁸² Woodson's ASNLH had been renamed as the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History in 1973. Mayes, *Kwanzaa*, 190.

population that lives in black ghettos.’⁸⁸³ Similarly, in Washington, D.C. there appeared to be a split between the ambitions of the city’s political elite and the expectations of its African American residents. Linda Charlton of the *New York Times* reported two very different visions of the Bicentennial – firstly that of the city’s commercial and political interests which ‘saw it as something to bring tourist business into the city’, and secondly that of its residents, who ‘saw the celebration more as an opportunity to rebuild and improve the city’s black neighborhoods.’⁸⁸⁴

Our Revolutionary History Has Come A Long, Long Way

Against this backdrop, *Ebony*’s 1975 special was dedicated to the Bicentennial as ‘200 Years of Black Trials and Triumphs.’⁸⁸⁵ Assistant art director Cecil Ferguson produced a cover montage featuring a diverse assortment of black pioneers, and magazine’s editors noted that ‘a good student of black history will recognize every person and event.’⁸⁸⁶ However, as Virginia Fowler has noted, the special’s cover (populated predominantly by black men) reflected broader gender disparities in the Bicentennial’s commemoration which were criticised by Nikki Giovanni and other female writers.⁸⁸⁷ In keeping with the national black reaction to the Bicentennial, *Ebony*’s depiction of the anniversary was decidedly mixed. Johnson contended that while white America was celebrating the nation’s 200th birthday, ‘Black America cannot quite join in on that celebration.’⁸⁸⁸ This ambiguous approach

⁸⁸³ Donald Janson, “Black Dissent and High Cost Snag Philadelphia Bicentennial Plans,” *New York Times*, 14 November 1970, 30; “Minorities Fight Plan for 1976 Bicentennial Fair,” *New York Times*, 10 January 1971, 64.

⁸⁸⁴ Linda Charlton, “Getting a Jump on D.C.’s Bicentennial,” *New York Times*, 29 June 1975, 279.

⁸⁸⁵ “*Ebony* Planning Bicentennial Issue,” *Chicago Defender*, 2 August 1975, 7.

⁸⁸⁶ “Cover,” *Ebony*, August 1975, 4.

⁸⁸⁷ Virginia C. Fowler, *Nikki Giovanni: a Biography* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 85.

⁸⁸⁸ Johnson, “Publisher’s Statement,” *Ebony*, August 1975, 32.

was embodied in a three part response to the question 'should Blacks celebrate the Bicentennial?', which featured contributions from Lerone Bennett, Vernon Jordan, and preacher Joseph H. Jackson.

Jackson was the most effusive of these contributors, offering a 'Resounding "Yes!"' which argued that by rejecting the Bicentennial, African Americans would merely 'deny their own history and their contributions to the life of this great nation.'⁸⁸⁹ Jordan provided a 'Qualified "Maybe"', which recognised the Bicentennial as an opportunity to stress the integral role played by blacks in the nation's development, but feared that the party was turning into a gaudy affair, 'full of noise and clamor but with little substance.'⁸⁹⁰ However, despite his reservations over the Bicentennial's commercialisation, Jordan reiterated Jackson's belief that to simply reject the anniversary would 'close to us the opportunity to use it for our own ends.'⁸⁹¹ By contrast, Bennett's response provided little scope for reconciliation, and offered a deeply pessimistic interpretation of the Bicentennial's commemoration as 'astounding', 'frightening', and 'dangerous.'⁸⁹²

If Bennett's depiction of the 'New South' in the magazine's 1971 special had alluded to his reservations over elements of *Ebony's* coverage, then his viewpoint of the Bicentennial confirmed this position. The historian denounced the Bicentennial as an embodiment of the 'essential schizophrenia of America life.'⁸⁹³ Bennett declared that 'this spectacle is an affront to truth and freedom. It is a desecration of the ideal. It is a mirage, an illusion.' He positioned the Bicentennial as an explicitly negative force, and as a threat to his understanding

⁸⁸⁹ Joseph H. Jackson, "A Resounding 'Yes!'," *Ebony*, August 1975, 36.

⁸⁹⁰ Jordan, "A Qualified 'Maybe'," *Ebony*, August 1975, 37.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸⁹² Bennett, "An Adamant 'No'," *Ebony*, August 1975, 40.

⁸⁹³ *Ibid.*, 38.

of black history as a living history: 'No for Martin King and Malcolm X and Medgar Evers', Bennett declared. 'No for Harriet Tubman. No for Nat Turner...For the Living, for the Dead, for the Unborn: No. No. No.'⁸⁹⁴

It was crucial that African Americans comprehensively rejected the Bicentennial, Bennett argued, because to do otherwise would represent a betrayal of an obligation to their ancestors. As Keith Mayes has noted, Bennett and other critics of the Bicentennial saw it as 'an example of a cultural revolution incomplete', and as a distraction from the continuing struggle for racial equality.⁸⁹⁵ Many of *Ebony's* readers appeared to share Bennett's reservations. The October 1975 edition of 'Backstage' noted that the Bicentennial issue had 'really stirred up the letter writers', and that the majority of responses supported Bennett's position.⁸⁹⁶ John Thibeaux dismissed the Bicentennial as 'only another of the white man's coverups', while Gregory Williams rejected the anniversary as little more than a tribute to '400 years of blood, sweat and tears, unemployment, lynchings, hunger and benign neglect.'⁸⁹⁷

The debate over the Bicentennial brought long brewing tensions between Bennett's writing and *Ebony's* overarching editorial philosophy to the boil. For perhaps the first time, Bennett can be seen to have vocalised his frustrations at *Ebony's* content within the publication itself. In his article 'An Adamant "No"', Bennett not only attacked the Bicentennial, but also alluded to *Ebony's* apparent complicity in encouraging a shift away from collective black activism through its emphasis on consumption and economic fulfilment. He contended that 'we are

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁹⁵ Mayes, *Kwanzaa*, 190.

⁸⁹⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1975, 22.

⁸⁹⁷ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, October 1975, 12-17.

not going to waste any time on red herring or black herring. The issue is not whether the blacks of 1975 consume more calories than the blacks of 1775. The issue is not whether we have more Cadillacs than the cocoa farmers of Ghana. The issue is freedom.’⁸⁹⁸ In rejecting the pursuit of lifestyle and personal status symbols as ‘false and extraneous issues’, Bennett’s article offered a direct critique of *Ebony*’s position as a consumer magazine.⁸⁹⁹

Bennett expanded on this position outside of JPC through television and public speaking engagements, where he substantiated his opposition to the Bicentennial.⁹⁰⁰ He rejected a host of efforts to involve him in commemorative activities sponsored by institutions such as Chicago Public Library, asserting that it was ‘a hypocrisy to celebrate a freedom that does not exist.’⁹⁰¹ Relatedly, Bennett venomously attacked the proliferation of ‘black heritage’ during the 1970s. He declared that ‘never before have we been so popular. They have even heard of us on Madison Avenue. Black heritage sells soap, whiskey and detergent. It sells everything, in fact, except the meaning of black heritage and the humanity of black people.’⁹⁰² By contrast, *Ebony*’s broader content offered a less critical image of the Bicentennial, with the magazine’s annual vacation guide in 1976 imploring readers to ‘Discover Yourself – It’s the Bicentennial Year.’⁹⁰³ In its descriptions of locations such as Harriet Tubman’s home as

⁸⁹⁸ Bennett, “An Adamant ‘No’,” 40.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹⁰⁰ Bennett, “Not As Beggars,” National Urban League Address, 1 August 1976, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files; Bennett, “Speech,” *Negro History Bulletin*, February 1976, 524-526; “Black on Black,” *Chicago Defender*, 2 August 1975, Johnson Publishing Company Clipping Files; Howard University MOI, 13 October 1975, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; “Media Group to Host Lerone Bennett,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 3 September 1975, D7.

⁹⁰¹ This remark was in response to an invitation to appear in a radio series for Chicago Public Library. Bennett would eventually reverse his decision not to appear, based on reassurances that the series was in no way ‘conceived to sugar-coat or gloss over historic fact.’ Barbara Moro to Lerone Bennett, 4 June 1975, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Barbara Moro to Lerone Bennett, 25 August 1975, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁹⁰² Bennett, “Speech,” 524.

⁹⁰³ Bims, “Annual Vacation Guide,” *Ebony*, May 1976, 80

‘enduring memorials to black history and achievement’, there was little evidence of the radical guerrilla Tubman that Bennett had depicted through his ‘Pioneers in Protest’ and ‘Great Moments in Black History’ series.⁹⁰⁴

When Bennett declared that never before had black heritage been talked about ‘in so many places with so little understanding’, he could easily have been talking about the pages of his own magazine.⁹⁰⁵ This included a host of adverts from American travel providers, who sought to celebrate black history and the Bicentennial on their own terms. American Airlines invited readers to ‘take an America vacation to 1770, 1844, 1895’ and black history sites which correlated with the dates such as the Beckwourth Pass in the Sierra Nevada or Frederick Douglass’ home in Washington, D.C.⁹⁰⁶ United Airlines offered a special Bicentennial fare to allow black passengers to ‘celebrate yesterday’s heroes’ including Harriet Tubman, Jean Baptiste DuSable and Peter Salem.⁹⁰⁷ Perhaps the most overt appeal came from Amtrak, which encouraged *Ebony*’s readers to ‘take Amtrak to black history.’⁹⁰⁸

Bennett’s criticisms of the Bicentennial can also be viewed as an extension, or rather a rearticulation, of his writing on class divisions within black activism and leadership during the 1960s and early 1970s.⁹⁰⁹ As *Ebony* became a less receptive space for explicit engagement with black political activism, Bennett’s discussion of class formation within black America shifted to a critique of ‘black heritage.’ In the build-up to the Bicentennial, Bennett’s ‘The Making of Black America’ series had celebrated the role of pioneering black entrepreneurs

⁹⁰⁴ Bennett, “The Private War of Harriet Tubman,” *Ebony*, June 1975, 65.

⁹⁰⁵ Bennett, “Speech,” 524.

⁹⁰⁶ “American,” *Ebony*, March 1975, 61.

⁹⁰⁷ “United,” *Ebony*, June 1975, 107.

⁹⁰⁸ “Amtrak,” *Ebony*, August 1975, 13.

⁹⁰⁹ Bennett, “Black Bourgeoisie Revisited,” *Ebony*, August 1973, 50.

and business leaders, and had applauded black press pioneers such as Frederick Douglass and Martin Delaney for recognising that ‘the real business of black business was liberation.’⁹¹⁰ By contrast, the consumption of black history around the Bicentennial appeared to confirm the ‘newly found interest of white corporations in controlling and capturing the Black consumer market.’⁹¹¹ This shift revealed Bennett’s awareness of *Ebony*’s limitations as an historical outlet, but also highlighted how discussions of black history had become increasingly commercialised by the mid-1970s.

As Bennett feared, the ways in which *Ebony*’s advertisers utilised black history did not occur within a vacuum, or manifest themselves solely as an aspect of the Bicentennial’s celebration. Rather, they were both a response to, and part of, the magazine’s broader retreat from the question of civil rights. Alongside an increasing number of advertisements which offered a nostalgic image of black history, *Ebony* published editorial features that shifted *Ebony*’s discussion of civil rights activism from the present to the past tense.⁹¹² A clear example of this can be seen through the introduction of a new feature in 1971 titled ‘Whatever Happened To...?’, which promised to ‘tell our readers just what a celebrity of the past is doing today.’⁹¹³ Between June 1971 and September 1975 *Ebony* ran 35 editions of ‘Whatever Happened To...?’, with around a third of figures profiled most commonly known for their political or cultural activism during the civil rights and Black Power movements.

⁹¹⁰ Bennett, “Money, Merchants, Markets Part I,” *Ebony*, November 1973, 82; Bennett, “Money, Merchants, Markets Part II,” *Ebony*, December 1973, 56; Bennett, “Money, Merchants, Markets Part III,” *Ebony*, February 1974, 66.

⁹¹¹ Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, 158.

⁹¹² James Meredith, “Black Leaders and the Wish to Die,” *Ebony*, May 1973, 154.

⁹¹³ “Backstage,” *Ebony*, 30.

The first activist to be profiled was Rosa Parks, who appeared in the 'The South Today' special of 1971.⁹¹⁴ Reflecting back on Parks' triumphant role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *Ebony* noted the professional and psychological strain Parks' role had taken on her and her family, and had led to her relocating to Detroit in 1957 where she worked as a receptionist for U.S. Representative John Conyers. This description was indicative of the ways in which professional progress during the 1960s had shifted many blacks away from grassroots activism. Subsequent profiles in the 'Whatever Happened To...?' series documented the transition of figures like NAACP field secretary E. Frederic Morrow into senior executive positions at institutions such as the Bank of America.⁹¹⁵ Similarly, *Ebony* profiled Jefferson Thomas, Carletta Wilson LaNier, and other members of the 'Little Rock Nine', who by the early 1970s were working for organisations such as the U.S. Women's Army Corp., and the Mobil Oil Corporation.⁹¹⁶

Many of these profiles attempted to emphasise a continued commitment to racial equality on behalf of those featured. However, this commitment had shifted from grass-roots activism and confrontational strategies to the process of challenging oppressive institutions and systems 'from the inside.' For example, the magazine's profile of Charlayne Hunter, who in 1961 had become the first black woman to enrol at the University of Georgia, celebrated her emergence by the 1970s as the first Harlem Bureau Chief for the *New York Times*.⁹¹⁷ One of the most compelling editions of 'Whatever Happened To...?' focused on the fate of the Greensboro Four, whose respective lives by 1972

⁹¹⁴ "Whatever Happened To...Rosa Parks?," *Ebony*, August 1971, 180.

⁹¹⁵ "Whatever Happened To...E. Frederic Morrow?," *Ebony*, December 1971, 182.

⁹¹⁶ "Whatever Happened To...The Little Rock 9?," *Ebony*, February 1972, 136-137.

⁹¹⁷ "Whatever Happened To...Charlayne Hunter?," *Ebony*, July 1972, 138-139.

highlighted the different trajectories of movement activists. On the one hand, Ezell Blair had converted to Islam, changed his name to Jibreel Khazan, and was teaching history at an educational co-op in the predominantly black enclave of Roxbury in Boston. On the other hand, Joseph McNeil had become an investment banker with the Bankers Trust in New York City.⁹¹⁸

The series occasionally had a catalysing effect for activists who had been marginalised by their radicalism. For example, after publishing a profile of black nationalist Robert Williams in December 1972, *Ebony* received an extraordinary letter from the article's protagonist.⁹¹⁹ Williams declared that, upon his return to the United States from China in the late 1960s, he had fallen victim to 'a deliberate conspiracy of silence and deception' relating to charges of kidnapping dating back to 1961. Following *Ebony's* profile, the activist announced that he was now receiving widespread assistance, and offered his heartfelt appreciation to the magazine. He argued that *Ebony's* coverage of his situation, and its impact, offered 'graphic proof that the black press is essential to our survival.'⁹²⁰ Yet through its nostalgic coverage of movement activists, and the feature's location at the very end of the magazine, *Ebony's* 'Whatever Happened To...?' section frequently served to frame activists and their activism as an historical footnote.

In February 1976 - the same month that President Ford issued his black history month address - *Ebony* published a reflective piece on the twentieth anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The magazine announced that Montgomery was 'a city reborn', where white business owners were 'more

⁹¹⁸ "Whatever Happened To...The Greensboro Four?," *Ebony*, August 1972, 181-182.

⁹¹⁹ "Whatever Happened To...Robert F. Williams?," *Ebony*, December 1972, 202.

⁹²⁰ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, March 1973, 13.

interested in profits than in keeping blacks in their “place.”⁹²¹ The ‘nostalgia of the moment’ appeared to overcome Ralph Abernathy as he addressed an audience at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, which had been named a national historic landmark in 1974.⁹²² In the same issue, an article by Alex Poinsett offered *Ebony’s* obituary for radical black activism.⁹²³ Poinsett asserted that the black revolution was ‘in prison these days, or exiled overseas, or in the hip pocket of an FBI agent.’ While he noted that several prominent Black Power advocates still lingered, ‘like heroic, bullet-riddled warriors refusing to die’, he argued that they were clutching to the strands of ‘a seemingly unrealizable dream.’⁹²⁴

As the energies of movement activists appeared to dissipate, the space they had inhabited was filled by advertising depictions of heroic black pioneers which offered ‘a lesson in achievement.’⁹²⁵ The narrative of failure which came to characterise *Ebony’s* depiction of Black Power in the 1970s no longer seemed to deserve a place within a triumphant history of black America that functioned as a narrative of racial uplift. From this perspective, the path toward a better America for blacks would come not through radical action, but through ‘a shift to the middle’ for figures such as Bobby Seale.⁹²⁶ Instead of participating in the present revolution, black Americans should be content with visiting where it might have happened in the past. Such endeavours were facilitated by travel providers like United Airlines, who offered special Bicentennial fares to visit

⁹²¹ “Bus Boycott Anniversary,” *Ebony*, February 1976, 37.

⁹²² James O. Horton, *Landmarks of African American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 180.

⁹²³ Poinsett, “Where are the Revolutionaries?,” *Ebony*, February 1976, 84.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁹²⁵ “North Carolina Mutual,” *Ebony*, February 1976, 10.

⁹²⁶ B. J. Mason, “A Shift to the Middle,” *Ebony*, August 1973, 80.

black heritage sites, and American Airlines, who informed *Ebony's* readers that 'taking you back into history is one of the things we do best.'⁹²⁷

This shift was embodied in a new series of special Bicentennial adverts produced by Greyhound under the heading of 'Our Revolutionary Spirit Has Come a Long, Long Way.' The series juxtaposed the image of a notable black historical figures with their alleged modern counterparts. The first advert pictured Sojourner Truth next to Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, declaring that 'it seems especially fitting, during this Bicentennial year, to salute two Black women who represent the same revolutionary spirit.'⁹²⁸ Whereas Truth had repeatedly expressed her disdain for the Constitution, this advert placed her next to a quote from Jordan which contended that 'my faith in the Constitution is whole, it is complete, it is total.'⁹²⁹ With similar logic, outspoken editor and abolitionist John Russwurm could be pictured next to a man who had been routinely attacked for his racial conservatism – John H. Johnson.⁹³⁰ Furthermore, through producing this series, the position of Greyhound appeared to be transformed - from a symbol of Jim Crow segregation and racial violence in the early 1960s to a torch-bearer of black America's 'revolutionary spirit' by the mid-1970s.

Intersecting Ford's February black history announcement, the Greyhound Bicentennial series and the highly anticipated publication of *Roots* in August 1976 was the cancellation of *Black World*.⁹³¹ Hoyt Fuller's own papers at Atlanta University Center, which have recently become available to researchers,

⁹²⁷ "American Airlines," *Ebony*, February 1976, 101; "United Airlines," *Ebony*, September 1975, 53.

⁹²⁸ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, April 1976, 9.

⁹²⁹ Peter Krass, *Sojourner Truth: Antislavery Activist* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004), 57.

⁹³⁰ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, June 1976, 9; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, October 1976, 11.

⁹³¹ *Negro Digest* had been renamed as *Black World* in May 1970. "Editors Notes," *Black World*, May 1970, 4.

illuminate his long standing struggles with Johnson over the periodical's financing and editorial direction.⁹³² Yet despite enduring tensions within Fuller and Johnson's professional relationship, the cancellation of *Black World* came as a shock to many activists.⁹³³ Johnson rationalised its termination as a simple economic matter, contending that he did not want to 'continue absorbing the recurring losses sustained' from *Black World*.⁹³⁴ However, a number of scholars have disputed this claim, and have speculated on other reasons for *Black World's* demise.⁹³⁵

Most recently in his 2010 doctoral thesis 'Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic', Jonathan Fenderson has mined Fuller's archival papers to offer a nuanced description of *Black World's* cancellation and Fuller's departure from JPC. Fenderson cites a number of both long-term and short-term factors, including enduring personal and professional differences, accumulated micro-aggressions within the workplace, its criticism of Zionism and its anti-apartheid agenda.⁹³⁶ Irrespective of the pragmatic or ideological reasons for *Black World's* cancellation, the periodical's demise appeared to signal the 'looming end of the Black Arts (and Black Power) Movement, and the academic institutionalization of the Black intellectual community.'⁹³⁷ Its cancellation mirrored the decline of black intellectual spaces such as the Institute of the Black World, which by the second half of the 1970s had been undermined by internal conflict, a lack of

⁹³² Hoyt Fuller to John Johnson, 16 July 1968; Box 15, Hoyt Fuller Papers; Hoyt Fuller to John Johnson, 6 August 1968, Box 15, Hoyt Fuller Papers; Hoyt Fuller to John Johnson, 9 July 1971, Box 16, Hoyt Fuller Papers; Hoyt Fuller to John Johnson, 17 May 1972, Box 15, Hoyt Fuller Papers.

⁹³³ Thompson, *Dudley Randall*, 134

⁹³⁴ "Backstage," *Ebony*, May 1976, 22.

⁹³⁵ Johnson with Bennett, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, 288-289; Watts, *Amiri Baraka*, 213-215; Smethurst, "The Black Arts Movement and Historically Black Colleges and Universities," in *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, 85-88; Fenderson, "Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic".

⁹³⁶ Fenderson, "Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic," 217-228.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

funding, and an 'increasingly conservative political culture.'⁹³⁸ By contrast, *Ebony* celebrated its own role in helping to widen 'the boundaries of the black world' in both the past and present – a role which was increasingly mediated and mapped by corporate agents.⁹³⁹

Conclusion

Ebony's emphasis on its importance as a voice for and to the black community was rooted in a belief that each issue of the magazine represented a 'microcosm of black America.'⁹⁴⁰ However, increasingly visible disparities in the lived experiences of blacks during the years since the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts provided a major challenge to this role. A key way in which *Ebony* attempted to consolidate notions of black collectivism and group identity was through its continued emphasis on a shared racial past. Through its coverage of the 'New South' and its promotion of heritage tourism, *Ebony* contended that travel could prove to be an important tool of historical awareness for the black community, which could also help to alleviate geographical and class tensions that solidified during the 1970s.

By documenting the development of the black travel market and the rise of heritage tourism, *Ebony* demonstrated the ways in which black history moved from the periphery to the centre of American popular and political culture during the 1960s and 1970s. However, even as Bennett warned against the vagaries of 'black heritage', many aspects of *Ebony's* content can be seen to have shifted toward a more reflective depiction of black history which overshadowed and at points helped to accelerate a retreat from black literary radicalism and

⁹³⁸ White, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 167-168.

⁹³⁹ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, November 1975, 30.

⁹⁴⁰ "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1975, 25.

critical expression. In turn, *Ebony's* advertisers capitalised on its celebration of black heritage tourism to champion their own awareness of and sensitivity to black consumers. By using black history as a marketing strategy, travel providers across the spectrum were able to celebrate the potential of a colourblind post-civil rights world, and at the same time distance themselves from past complicity in racially exclusionary practice. As the next chapter will show, this approach also came to frame popular narratives of civil rights activism, and the commemoration of individuals and events which dominated the movement.

CHAPTER 6:

His Light Still Shines: *Ebony*, Black History, and the ‘Real Meaning’ of the King Holiday

Whether by accident or design, corporate and political efforts to celebrate black history as part of the Bicentennial often functioned to historically bookend the civil rights and Black Power movements. In addition to pushing for a general recognition of the ‘impressive contributions of black Americans to our national life and culture’, these efforts coalesced around specific black activists such as Frederick Douglass and, following his assassination in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr.⁹⁴¹ If King’s death appeared to confirm his elevation into the ‘pantheon of national heroes’, it also catalysed a battle to frame his legacy which continues to be fought through private ceremony, public commemoration and political discourse.⁹⁴² A major part of this struggle focused around the movement to establish a national holiday for King, which was signed into law by president Ronald Reagan in 1983.

For Bennett, the movement to establish a national holiday for King was one which cemented King’s standing as a race-conscious activist for social justice, and which forced America to recognise the broader contributions of blacks in the nation’s development.⁹⁴³ Bennett argued that the role of black history as a ‘living, utilitarian science’ was vital for understanding the ‘real

⁹⁴¹ Ford, “Message on the Observance of Black History Month.”

⁹⁴² Chappell, *Waking From the Dream*, xi-xvi; Owen J. Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman, *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory* (Chicago: The Center For American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2008); Joseph Tilden Rhea, *Race Pride and American Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 112-117; George R. Seay, “A Prophet with Honor?: the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday and the Making of a National Icon,” in *The Domestication of Martin Luther King Jr.: Clarence B. Jones, Right-Wing Conservatism, and the Manipulation of the King Legacy*, ed. Lewis V. Baldwin and Rufus Burrow, Jr. (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 238.

⁹⁴³ “Birthday Celebration For M.L.K.,” *Ebony*, March 1981, 126-129.

meaning' of the King Holiday, and the true power of King's race-conscious and radical socialism.⁹⁴⁴ Yet for Reagan the holiday appeared to symbolise something quite different. Upon signing the bill which ratified the King Holiday in 1983, Reagan declared that King had 'awakened something strong and true, a sense that true justice must be colorblind.'⁹⁴⁵ Through these remarks, Reagan sought to dislocate King's rhetoric from historically formed notions of racial and social identity, and reinforce a narrative of King's life which positioned him as an arbiter of colourblind personal responsibility.⁹⁴⁶

In addition to highlighting tensions between a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic understanding of King's legacy, *Ebony's* content also revealed some of the 'commemorative complexities' which underpinned its own coverage of the Holiday, and the response to it from within the black community.⁹⁴⁷ Even as Bennett looked to reject the image of a colourblind King imagined by Reagan and other conservative voices, *Ebony's* celebration of black achievement can be argued to have provided evidence of the declining significance of race. Furthermore, through its commemoration of King, *Ebony* helped to promote a form of 'Jim Crow nostalgia' which privileged the cultural and moral values of previous black generations. As a result, Bennett's depiction of the 'living King' and *Ebony's* celebration of the King Holiday underscored generational tensions

⁹⁴⁴ Bennett, "A Living History," 27-32; Bennett, "The Real Meaning of the King Holiday," *Ebony*, February 1986, 31; Michael Eric Dyson, *I May Not Get There With You: the True Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 12-14; Wilson, "We Must Become Conscious of Our Own Greatness," Lerone Bennett Papers.

⁹⁴⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks on Signing the Bill Making the Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., a National Holiday," 2 November 1983, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40708>.

⁹⁴⁶ Peter McLaren, "Unthinking Whiteness: Rearticulating Diasporic Practise," in *Revolutionary Pedagogies: Cultural Politics, Instituting Education, and the Discourse of Theory*, ed. Peter Trifonas (New York: Routledge, 2000), 146.

⁹⁴⁷ Alderman, "Street Names and the Scaling of Memory: the Politics of Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. Within the African American Community," in *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement: Controversies and Debates*, ed. John A. Kirk (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 237; Richard M. Merelman, *Representing Black Culture: Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 77.

within the black community, and linked the challenges faced by a 'new generation' of post-civil rights black youth to a move away from the black past.

A Hero To Be Remembered: *Ebony*, King and the Future of Black History

From the viewpoint of the twenty-first century, it appears that King's confirmation as an icon of American history was as inevitable as his embrace by the American marketplace. Yet at the moment of his death this position was far from assured.⁹⁴⁸ Although the majority of American politicians expressed their grief at King's demise, prominent public figures such as Georgia governor Lester Maddox remained openly suspicious of his activism and leadership role.⁹⁴⁹ Politicians such as Reagan and Strom Thurmond were less obviously resistant to King's commemoration, but still sought to politicise his death and the riots which followed as evidence of a national retreat from 'law and order.'⁹⁵⁰ This argument helped to reinforce a key plank of Richard Nixon's platform for election in 1968, but also promoted the notion that by seeking to disrupt white supremacy, civil rights activists were somehow 'responsible for the violence that the white power structure used to defend its privileges.'⁹⁵¹

Similarly, while the vast majority of American media outlets were quick to vocalise dismay at King's assassination, it is important to recognise that this apparent uniformity carried both practical and ideological ramifications. For

⁹⁴⁸ David Andrew Harmon, *Beneath the Image of the Civil Rights Movement and Race Relations: Atlanta, Georgia, 1946-1981* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 217-219.

⁹⁴⁹ Rebecca Burns, *Burial for a King: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Funeral and the Week that Transformed Atlanta and Rocked the Nation* (London: Scribner, 2011); Rodney T. Hartnett and Carol U. Libby, "Agreement with Views of Martin Luther King, Jr. Before and After His Assassination," *Phylon* 33 (1972): 79-87; Timothy J. Minchin and John A. Salmond, *After the Dream: Black and White Southerners since 1965* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 61-62.

⁹⁵⁰ Bernard von Bothmer, *Framing the Sixties: the Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 64.

⁹⁵¹ Jeremy D. Mayer, "Reagan and Race: Prophet of Color Blindness, Baiter of the Backlash," in *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America's Fortieth President*, Kyle Longley et al (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 84.

individual publications, it helped to soothe over previous criticisms of King's actions and leadership.⁹⁵² More significantly, mainstream media attempts to construct a national 'pseudoconsensus of grief' around King's were motivated in part by a desire to control black protest and to contain black rage.⁹⁵³ Deborah Heitner has argued that the decision to broadcast King's funeral on network television was a prominent example of such attempts.⁹⁵⁴ Scholars have also identified a broad split in the response to King's death from black and white media outlets. Whereas white media outlets generally expressed greater shock at King's loss, black media outlets presented a more fatalistic interpretation of his assassination.⁹⁵⁵ In *Ebony* this sentiment was articulated by Bennett, who argued that King's fate had long been ensnared in the 'specific web the spider of racism was spinning'⁹⁵⁶

If the response of black and white media outlets suggested broad differences in the response to King's death, then subsequent responses from within the black community highlighted contestations over what might constitute 'an appropriate scale of memorialization' for King.⁹⁵⁷ This was immediately apparent through the different approaches of the SCLC and the King estate in the aftermath of his death. The SCLC looked to honour King's memory through a rededication to social protest, while the King estate focused its energies on the development of the King Center in Atlanta as a physical monument to his legacy. Such differences extended to the date of a potential King Holiday, with

⁹⁵² Richard Lentz, *Symbols, the News Media, and Martin Luther King* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 283-286.

⁹⁵³ Bob Blauner, *Still the Big News: Racial Oppression in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 34-35.

⁹⁵⁴ Heitner, *Black Power TV*, 1-3.

⁹⁵⁵ Ron Eyerman, *The Cultural Sociology of Political Assassination: From MLK and RFK to Fortuyn and Van Gogh* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 51.

⁹⁵⁶ Bennett, "The Martyrdom of Martin," 176-177.

⁹⁵⁷ Alderman, "Street Names and the Scaling of Memory," 235-237.

the SCLC focused on the date of King's death, and the King family favouring the date of his birth.⁹⁵⁸ *Ebony's* readers chimed in with their own suggestions, contending that the day the word Negro was withdrawn from public use 'should be known as Martin Luther King Day.'⁹⁵⁹

From a different perspective, King's death would come to mark a key moment of historical rupture within *Ebony*. As Daniel Marcus has noted, for magazines such as *Newsweek* the 1970s became the decade during which the 1950s and 1960s were publicly defined as distinct periods through a narrative of 'innocence, trauma, maturity and nostalgia.'⁹⁶⁰ By contrast, *Ebony* refused to separate these decades into distinct periods, but emphasised the modern civil rights movement as an important continuity between the two. Rather than distinguish between a golden 1950s and a riotous 1960s, *Ebony's* coverage sought to separate these two decades from the 1970s. Features such as 'Whatever Happened To...?' accentuated this divide, while King's traumatic death came to be seen as indicative of the turmoil of the 'Sadistic Sixties.'⁹⁶¹

In *Ebony*, King's death became a witness to 'the dissolution of the energies of the movement and the withdrawal of government support for its aims.'⁹⁶² Articles on the King family focused this sense of mourning on an individual level, while *Ebony's* readers began to describe their own experiences in relation to 'the Golden Age of Martin Luther King.'⁹⁶³ Furthermore, anxieties over King's memory channelled anxieties as to the future of black history as a whole. This was made explicit through a 1975 photo-editorial titled 'A Hero To

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., 236.

⁹⁵⁹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1968, 20.

⁹⁶⁰ Daniel Marcus, *Happy Days and Wonder Years: the Fifties and Sixties in Contemporary Cultural Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 19.

⁹⁶¹ "Backstage," *Ebony*, January 1970, 25.

⁹⁶² Marcus, *Happy Days and Wonder Years*, 22.

⁹⁶³ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, June 1969, 22.

Be Remembered' which warned that King's life and legacy was in danger of being forgotten or neglected. The editorial contended that 'there are some young black adults who might want to deny his greatness; they need to be convinced. There are older blacks who seem to have forgotten him; they need to be reminded...black people cannot forget their heroes and remain a great people.'⁹⁶⁴ Readers such as Roland Gordon reiterated this position, and expressed their disgust at how King had been allowed to 'fade into the annals of history.'⁹⁶⁵

While addressing King's legacy specifically, this photo-editorial also reflected Bennett's reservations over the black heritage boom which had mushroomed around the Bicentennial. In the second half of the 1970s *Ebony's* pages became littered with adverts from major corporations which utilised black history as a marketing strategy. Whereas in the late 1960s advertisers such as Old Taylor had taken their cue from Bennett's black history series, this connection would be made explicit by corporations such as Bell System in the 1970s through the use of extended quotes from Bennett's work as part of advertising in *Ebony* and other magazines.⁹⁶⁶ By using the rhetoric of prominent black activists or historians such as Bennett or King in their adverts, advertisers sought to address the question of how their depictions of black history could be read as 'authentic.'⁹⁶⁷ In addition, they helped to reinforce a hegemonic narrative of King's life, which championed the civil rights leader as a 'heroic

⁹⁶⁴ "A Hero To Be Remembered," *Ebony*, April 1975, 134.

⁹⁶⁵ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, June 1975, 16.

⁹⁶⁶ "Bell System," *Ebony*, December 1976, 86-87; "Bell System," *Ebony*, October 1976, 82-83.

⁹⁶⁷ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, January 1976, 9; "Greyhound," *Ebony*, February 1976, 13; Marable, *Living Black History*, 21.

moderate', whose actions served to challenge 'race-bounded views of history and society.'⁹⁶⁸

On the other hand, *Ebony's* looked to emphasise an 'interior' or counter-hegemonic narrative which King's life, which was 'more about constructing a role model for the African American community...than presenting a multicultural lesson for non-blacks.'⁹⁶⁹ This position looked to reiterate Bennett's reservations over white corporate engagement with black history, and by extension *Ebony's* continued importance as a black authored historical text. Furthermore, it complemented the magazine's increasing handwringing over the physical, emotional, and psychological health of the black community. Articles such as 'Suicide: a Growing Menace to Black Women', and 'Where are the Black Men?', reflected both a broader turn towards self-help and holistic practises during the 1970s, and anxieties regarding the 'state of Black America' during the years following King's death.⁹⁷⁰ From this perspective, black history provided a series of teachable moments which could be used to address continuing challenges within black American life.

Bennett expanded on this idea through an extraordinary photo-editorial in October 1977, which placed black history at the centre of a 'crisis of the black spirit.' Bennett warned that 'we have come to a great fork in the road of Black destiny...a Great Black Depression and politics of malign neglect are eroding

⁹⁶⁸ Alderman, "Street Names and the Scaling of Memory," 237; Lentz, *Symbols, the News Media, and Martin Luther King*, 283.

⁹⁶⁹ Alderman, "Street Names and the Scaling of Memory," 237; Merelman, *Representing Black Culture*, 77; Fath Davis Ruffins, "Mythos, Memory, and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820-1990," in *Museums and Communities: the Politics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine M. Kreamer and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 506-611.

⁹⁷⁰ Jacquelyne Jackson, "Where are the Black Men?," *Ebony*, March 1972, 99; King, "Who's That Lady?," 87; Pierce, "Is There a Male Change of Life?," *Ebony*, July 1975, 112; Camille Rucker, "How to Prevent Suicide," *Ebony*, December 1976, 128; Jack Slater, "Suicide: a Growing Menace to Black Women," *Ebony*, September 1973, 152; "Stresses and Strains on Black Women," *Ebony*, June 1974, 33.

the material foundations of our communities, and the fallout from this is eroding the moral and spiritual foundations of Black culture.⁹⁷¹ The editor argued that the only resolution to this crisis was a recommitment to the founding principles of black history, and 'a rededication to the spirit of sacrifice and struggle that enabled our forefathers to survive slavery and segregation.' King's role as the spiritual leader of the movement placed him at the centre of this struggle 'for the soul and spirit of America.'⁹⁷²

Whilst *Ebony* was quick to celebrate the new opportunities and experiences available to post-civil rights black youth, it also suggested that this may have come at the expense of a commitment to the ongoing struggle for racial equality.⁹⁷³ Bennett turned to the words of Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset to explore the tension between the civil rights generation, and a new generation of young black Americans who, at times, appeared to find 'hardly any community of interest with the past.'⁹⁷⁴ He warned younger African Americans to remember that 'we are oppressed in America not because we are young and not because we are old but because we are Black.'⁹⁷⁵ Furthermore, because they were a generation which was still searching for 'a purpose, a theme and a unifying idea', it was essential that they heeded the teachings of King and other activists in order to reenergise the struggle for racial equality.⁹⁷⁶

The King Holiday and Colourblind Conservatism

Through numerous articles on King's family, reflective accounts of his life, and coverage of developing projects such as the King Center, *Ebony*

⁹⁷¹ Bennett, "The Crisis of the Black Spirit," *Ebony*, October 1977, 142.

⁹⁷² *Ibid.*, 144.

⁹⁷³ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1978, 32

⁹⁷⁴ Bennett, "The Lost/Found Generation," *Ebony*, August 1978, 35.

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

demonstrated that it was doing its bit to ensure the civil rights leader was remembered.⁹⁷⁷ Given *Ebony's* close connections to the King family, it is unsurprising that its commemoration of King aligned with the primary interests of the King estate.⁹⁷⁸ However, even as Bennett assumed an influential role in the Center's early development, the historian looked to push his own understanding of the institution's role and significance. In a speech to the Center's Board of Trustees at its first annual meeting in February 1970, Bennett explicitly rooted its importance in King's own radical potential. He positioned the Center as a 'concrete manifestation of our *duty* to pick up Dr. King's torch and advance on the trenches of the four evils he identified in his last published article – the evils of racism, militarism, poverty, and materialism.'⁹⁷⁹

On a broader level, discussions of how to commemorate King's life came to focus on whether his birthday should be made a national holiday. In the immediate aftermath of King's death John Conyers had introduced a bill to make King's birthday a national holiday, and it would quickly gain the support of figures such as Coretta Scott King, Andrew Young and Walter Fauntroy.⁹⁸⁰ Ralph Abernathy was another influential supporter of the bill, and would use his role as the president of the SCLC to proclaim the 15th of January 'a national people's holiday.'⁹⁸¹ By the beginning of the 1970s newspapers such as the *Boston Globe* were reporting that a national campaign to make King's birthday a federal holiday was underway.⁹⁸²

⁹⁷⁷ "A Monument to a Martyr," *Ebony*, April 1974, 127.

⁹⁷⁸ The King Center Newsletter 1970, Box 33, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers; Lerone Bennett to Coretta Scott King, 30 June 1970, Box 5, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

⁹⁷⁹ Bennett, *The Challenge of Blackness*, 84.

⁹⁸⁰ Mayes, *Kwanzaa*, 32.

⁹⁸¹ Leroy Aarons, "Abernathy Declares King Day," *Washington Post*, 9 January 1970, A3.

⁹⁸² "National Day Honoring Dr. King's Birth Urged," *Boston Globe*, 11 January 1970, 39.

These efforts reaped some rewards on a local scale and regional scale. In New York, Governor Rockefeller declared the 15th of January to be 'Martin Luther King Day', and municipal governments in cities such as New York, Chicago and Atlanta chose to close public schools on King's birthday as a mark of respect.⁹⁸³ During the first half of the 1970s, a majority of Republicans and a number of prominent conservative Democrats repeatedly rejected the Holiday, citing reservations over King's alleged communist connections.⁹⁸⁴ Lester Maddox drew further criticism when he declared the country 'might as well set aside a day in honor of Benedict Arnold', a general who had defected to the British during the American Revolutionary War.⁹⁸⁵ However, by the end of the 1970s support for the King Holiday had coalesced into a truly national movement. Conyers' bill came to a vote in the House of Representatives for the first time in 1979, although it would take four more years for the bill to be passed.⁹⁸⁶

In *Ebony*, the movement for the King Holiday was seen as an important reminder that King was 'a hero to be remembered', and that the struggle for racial equality was not yet over. As such, the question of whether prominent activists and celebrities supported the bill was seen as a reflection on their own commitment to civil rights. This was outlined through a pair of call and response articles in May and July 1979 titled 'Are Superstars Forgetting Their Roots?' and

⁹⁸³ "Beame Will Help Mark Martin Luther King Day," *New York Times*, 15 January 1974, 39; "Boston Remembers Martin Luther King," *Boston Globe*, 14 January 1971, 3; "Honors For Dr. King Set For Tomorrow," *New York Times*, 14 January 1970, 22; "Martin Luther King Birthday Observed," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 January 1971, C1; "Martin Luther King Day," *New York Times*, 15 January 1973, 1.

⁹⁸⁴ Dyson, *I May Not Get There With You*, 289; Peter J. Ling, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 322-323.

⁹⁸⁵ "Maddox Mars a Day of Tributes to King," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 January 1973, 5.

⁹⁸⁶ "President, in Atlanta, Asks Congress to Vote Holiday for Dr. King," *New York Times*, 15 January 1979, 1.

'The Superstars Who Have Not Forgotten Their Roots.'⁹⁸⁷ *Ebony* contended that Stevie Wonder's efforts to promote the King Holiday were clear evidence that he was a true black role model, in contrast to black superstars who had distanced themselves from activism and were surrounded by 'white lawyers, white managers, white public relations experts and white hangers-on.'⁹⁸⁸ Wonder's growing prominence within the movement to secure the King Holiday led to an *Ebony* cover story in April 1980, with the singer being pictured holding a press conference alongside Ronald Dellums, as an honoured guest at the King Day Parade in Washington, D.C., and delivering a speech at a church in front of a portrait of King.⁹⁸⁹

Wonder would again take centre stage in the magazine's coverage of King through his role at the first National King Birthday March in January 1981. *Ebony* reiterated Wonder's assertion that the holiday would serve a broader purpose by recognising King as 'a symbol of the tremendous contributions Black people have made to this country's historical development.'⁹⁹⁰ The timing of the march was also significant, coming just a week before Reagan's inauguration. Keith Mayes has suggested that fears over Reagan's election leading to a new wave of anti-civil rights initiatives caused the leaders of the King Holiday movement to broaden its appeal. As a result, they were able to create a grassroots coalition which cut across intersecting lines of race, class and gender.⁹⁹¹

⁹⁸⁷ Sanders, "Are Superstars Forgetting Their Roots?," *Ebony*, May 1979, 54; Sanders, "Superstars Who Have Not Forgotten Their Roots," *Ebony*, July 1979, 38.

⁹⁸⁸ Sanders, "Are Superstars Forgetting Their Roots?," 56.

⁹⁸⁹ Slater, "The Secret Life of Stevie Wonder," *Ebony*, April 1980, 31.

⁹⁹⁰ "Birthday Celebration For MLK," *Ebony*, March 1981, 126.

⁹⁹¹ Mayes, *Kwanzaa*, 191.

For *Ebony* and other black media outlets, the ratification of the King Holiday in 1983 was a symbolic moment in the age-old struggle for racial equality, and a move which heralded the 'political coming of age of blacks.'⁹⁹² Yet for conservatives, the true meaning of King's legacy appeared to be markedly different.⁹⁹³ Utilised most effectively by Reagan, conservative rhetoric sought to dislocate King from historically formed notions of racial identity and black consciousness, and to frame continuing racial inequalities as 'unrelated to social conditions of domination and subordination and to social attributes such as class, culture, language and education.'⁹⁹⁴ These efforts were supplemented by the publication of studies such as William Julius Wilson's *The Declining Significance of Race* in 1978, which argued that race was become a less significant factor in determining the life chances of black Americans.⁹⁹⁵ Although more liberal commentators such as Wilson rarely supported direct attacks on civil rights policies, they advocated for a move away from race-focused public policy and a focus on 'largely race-neutral, structural economic changes.'⁹⁹⁶

The appropriation of King's memory by political actors such as Reagan was hardly a new phenomenon. Following his death politicians on both sides of the political spectrum shamelessly claimed the civil rights leader as 'someone with whom they had always identified.'⁹⁹⁷ Incumbent Richard Nixon and his challenger George McGovern would both utilise King's memory in an attempt to cultivate black political support during the 1972 presidential campaign. For Nixon, this had centred on hints at support of a national holiday for King which

⁹⁹² Bebe Moore Campbell, "A National Holiday For King," *Black Enterprise*, January 1984, 21.

⁹⁹³ "Congressman Conyers Predicts Passage of King Holiday Bill," *Jet*, 29 January 1981, 13.

⁹⁹⁴ McLaren, "Unthinking Whiteness," 146.

⁹⁹⁵ William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

⁹⁹⁶ Tim Wise, *Colorblind: the Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2010), 4.

⁹⁹⁷ Blauner, *Still the Big News*, 34.

were directed toward prominent black celebrities such as James Brown and Sammy Davis Jr.⁹⁹⁸ This approach disguised the extent to which his own relationship with King had soured during the 1960s, and his initial receptiveness to Hoover's attempts at maligning King's character.⁹⁹⁹ McGovern's campaign committee adopted the less furtive approach of printing adverts in *Ebony* and other black publications which cited McGovern's position as the 'principal sponsor in the Senate of the bill' to make King's birthday a national holiday.¹⁰⁰⁰

Reagan's later descriptions of King as a man whose words and actions 'stirred our nation to the very depths of his soul' were similarly calculated.¹⁰⁰¹ The president had threatened to veto the bill on numerous occasions, and had consistently exhibited his personal prejudices toward King over the years leading up to its passage.¹⁰⁰² Reagan's words and actions provided a powerful incentive for figures such as Jesse Helms and John Porter East to lobby aggressively against the holiday's ratification.¹⁰⁰³ Following its passage Reagan stirred further controversy in a sly reference to King's reputed communist affiliations, which necessitated an apology to Coretta Scott King.¹⁰⁰⁴ Reagan's own shift from antagonism to affectation was part of deeply rooted effort to reimagine King's rhetoric and significance in a way that appealed to conservative voters.¹⁰⁰⁵

⁹⁹⁸ "Brown Says Nixon Gave Post-Vote King Pledge," *Afro-American*, 21 October 1972, 19; Robert DeLeon, "Sammy Davis Jr.," *Ebony*, March 1974, 40.

⁹⁹⁹ Kotlowksi, *Nixon's Civil Rights*, 159-165; Rhea, *Race Pride and American Identity*, 115.

¹⁰⁰⁰ "What Has Mr. Nixon Ever Really Done For You?," *Ebony*, November 1972, 29.

¹⁰⁰¹ David Hoffman, "King is Saluted as President Signs Holiday Into Law," *Washington Post*, 3 November 1983, A1.

¹⁰⁰² James H. Broussard, *Ronald Reagan: Champion of Conservative America* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 151.

¹⁰⁰³ David T. Courtwright, *No Right Turn: Conservative Politics in Liberal America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 13.

¹⁰⁰⁴ von Bothmer, *Framing the Sixties*, 63-65; Dyson, *I May Not Get There With You*, 225.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Blauner, *Still the Big News*, 35; Chappell, *Waking from the Dream*, 99.

Arguably the clearest public declaration of this vision came in a 1985 radio address on civil rights, where Reagan vocalised his firm opposition to hiring quotas and affirmative action programmes. The president asserted that hiring quotas were unconstitutional and denied jobs 'to many who would have gotten them otherwise, but who weren't born a specific race or sex. That's discrimination pure and simple and is exactly what the civil rights laws were designed to stop.'¹⁰⁰⁶ Seeking to justify his remarks, Reagan turned to the image of King, recalling the preacher's dream of a society where 'people would be judged on the content of their character, not by the color of their skin.'¹⁰⁰⁷ Through the use of such rhetoric, Reagan and other prominent public figures were able to transform King's standing among many conservatives; from the demagogue imagined by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover in the 1960s, to a figure that could be celebrated as a hero of American progress and individualism.¹⁰⁰⁸

Furthermore, by looking to freeze King's legacy around the preacher's iconic March on Washington address, Reagan added to a hegemonic civil rights narrative which had become 'twisted by ideology and political contestation, and embedded in heritage tours, museums, public rituals, textbooks, and various other artifacts of mass culture' by the 1980s.¹⁰⁰⁹ This was not limited to King's memory, but was indicative of the broader commemoration of civil rights and Black Power organisations and activists such as Angela Davis, which came to function as a 'nostalgic surrogate for historical memory.'¹⁰¹⁰ The framing of

¹⁰⁰⁶ Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Civil Rights," 15 June 1985, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38782>.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁸ David Garrow's 1981 study arguably still offers the most comprehensive overview of Hoover's personal and professional pursuit of King. David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: from 'Solo' to Memphis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).

¹⁰⁰⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91 (2005): 1233.

¹⁰¹⁰ Davis, "Afro Images," 44.

King's legacy to the period between the mid-1950s and the late 1960s helped to shift the struggle for racial equality away from ongoing debates about laws or resources, to a discussion of how the movement's 'golden years' should be remembered.¹⁰¹¹ In this way, commentators were able to simultaneously elevate and diminish the achievements and ambitions of the civil rights activists, and prevent both King and the movement he represented from speaking effectively to the challenges of the post-civil rights years.¹⁰¹²

This embrace of civil rights history occurred at the precise moment at which Reagan's administration was attempting to dismantle social programmes which had been specifically created to remedy past racial inequities.¹⁰¹³ Even as he privately undermined King's image, Reagan's public rhetoric harnessed King's rhetoric and memory to advocate for a dismantling of civil rights legislation.¹⁰¹⁴ More problematically, Reagan argued that quotas 'cast a shadow on the real achievements of minorities', which marked them out as a 'double tragedy.' In justification of this position, the president could point to a new generation of black conservatives which included William Bradford Reynolds, Thomas Sowell, Walter Smith and Clarence Thomas.¹⁰¹⁵ These figures reiterated Reagan's distrust for race-based social welfare or affirmative action projects, argued for a greater degree of 'personal responsibility' and political

¹⁰¹¹ Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, "Introduction," in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, ed. Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), xii.

¹⁰¹² Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," 1234.

¹⁰¹³ Sarah Nilsen, "Some People Just Hide in Plain Sight: Historicizing Racism in *Mad Men*," in *The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America*, ed. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 193.

¹⁰¹⁴ Denise M. Bostdorff and Steven R. Goldzwig, "History, Collective Memory, and the Appropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Reagan's Rhetorical Legacy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35 (2005): 661.

¹⁰¹⁵ Lee May, "U.S. Aide's 'Colorblind' Remark Draws Rebuke," *Hartford Courant*, 13 September 1983, A3.

diversity within the black community, and even went so far as to oppose the renewal of the Voting Rights Act in 1982.¹⁰¹⁶

In the eyes of conservative commentators, policies that supported hiring quotas represented an unconstitutional attempt at 'positive discrimination.'¹⁰¹⁷ Yet such an approach negated the generational accumulation of wealth and privileges by white Americans, and ignored the disproportionate impact of cuts to social welfare programmes on black Americans.¹⁰¹⁸ *Ebony's* publisher Johnson contended that 'not since the first Reconstruction period have we seen so many assaults' on civil rights.¹⁰¹⁹ However, by appropriating King's words, Reagan was able to position both his social and economic policies as a fulfilment of King's own principles and, by extension, the goals of the movement.¹⁰²⁰ This sentiment was reiterated by figures such as Attorney General Edwin Meese, who argued that by proposing to eliminate minority hiring quotas for government contractors, he was 'trying to carry out the original intent of the civil rights movement.'¹⁰²¹ From this position, King's legacy was rooted in the vision of a colourblind society which 'exalted individualism,

¹⁰¹⁶ Michael Ondaatje, *Black Conservative Intellectuals in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 9; Raymond Wolters, *Right Turn: William Bradford Reynolds, the Reagan Administration, and Black Civil Rights* (1996), 218-219.

¹⁰¹⁷ Nicholas Laham, *The Reagan Presidency and the Politics of Race: in Pursuit of Colorblind Justice and Limited Government* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), 74; Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion: the Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), 194.

¹⁰¹⁸ John Ehrman and Michael W. Flamm, *Debating the Reagan Presidency* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 50; Greta de Jong *Invisible Enemy: The African American Freedom Struggle after 1965* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 114-115.

¹⁰¹⁹ Alison Muscatine, "UDC Graduates Told to Preserve Civil Rights," *Washington Post*, 12 May 1985, D4.

¹⁰²⁰ Laham, *The Reagan Presidency and the Politics of Race*, 75; Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Martin Luther King, Jr., and Black Americans," 18 January 1986, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/11886b.htm>.

¹⁰²¹ Howard Kutz, "King Cited in Defense of End to Hiring Goals," *Washington Post*, 16 January 1986, A11.

opposed race-conscious remedies such as affirmative action, and pursued integration as an end in itself.¹⁰²²

Bennett and the 'Living King'

Against this backdrop, Bennett published a series of articles in *Ebony* during the first half of the 1980s which probed the 'deeper meanings of black history.'¹⁰²³ Bennett's writing was grounded on the basic premise that black Americans had 'not yet overcome'; a position which Bennett articulated through *Ebony* and in an edited collection by Michael Namorato.¹⁰²⁴ The editor left *Ebony's* readers in no doubt of the challenges which still confronted black Americans, arguing that 'we haven't even defined what we must do in order to overcome.' Bennett centred this challenge in the continuing duality of black life in the United States, which had been brought into sharp focus by the undisputed gains of the civil rights years. Black Americans were forced to confront the reality that everything had changed, and yet, paradoxically, '*nothing has changed*.'¹⁰²⁵

Bennett expressed this paradox in a metaphor, contending that 'we crossed a river, and now we've got to cross a sea.' Accordingly, while the gains of the civil rights movement represented an important milestone in the movement toward true racial equality, the far greater task remained of challenging the institutionalised roots of inequality within American society. Similarly, while Bennett noted that King's legacy was central to the memory of

¹⁰²² Steven F. Lawson, "Long Origins of the Short Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968," in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 27.

¹⁰²³ Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 39.

¹⁰²⁴ Bennett, "Have We Overcome?," *Ebony*, November 1979, 33-42; Bennett, "Have We Overcome?," in *Have We Overcome? Race Relations since Brown, 1954-1979*, ed. Michael V. Namorato (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), 189-200.

¹⁰²⁵ Bennett, "Have We Overcome?," 36-38.

the movement in the 1950s and 1960s, he did not see King as a culminating figure in a triumphant march toward equality which peaked during the 1960s. Instead, Bennett envisioned King as part of just one wave in a larger historical process, and in the 'ebbing and flowing of the energies of the people.'¹⁰²⁶ In doing so, he drew attention to the long origins of the short civil rights movement which peaked during the post-war decades.¹⁰²⁷

From this vantage point, history is a dialogue, and the movement of the last 25 years was a vast and leaping wave in a continuous flow of energy that started with the first revolt on the first slave ship and will not end until America deals with the revolutionary mandate of its birth.¹⁰²⁸

Bennett would develop this argument further through a special Black History Month feature in February 1981 titled 'Listen to the Blood: the Meaning of Black History.' In this article, Bennett utilised his understanding of black history as an organic and cyclical process to explicitly situate King's legacy within a broader living history of black America.¹⁰²⁹ Taking up Du Bois' call for African Americans to 'listen to the blood' which had been expressed in his 1924 study *The Gift of Black Folk*, Bennett implored his readers to recognise 'black history is a part of nature and revolves in cycles, endlessly, birth, growth and death, progression and retrogression.' By virtue of this connection to their own history, Bennett declared that black people had 'a mission to either democratize America or the world.'¹⁰³⁰

'Listen to the Blood' formalised the notion of a living history which Bennett had developed over the previous two decades. In explicitly outlining the

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰²⁷ Lawson, "Long Origins of the Short Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968," 26-28.

¹⁰²⁸ Bennett, "Have We Overcome?," 40.

¹⁰²⁹ Bennett, "Listen to the Blood," 33.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., 33-34.

cyclical nature of black history, Bennett built on earlier writing in series such as 'Black Power', and through his engagement with the 'New South.' It marked the culmination of an arc away from considerations of black history from a 'chronological' to a 'developmental' perspective, which can be traced through books such as *Before the Mayflower*, *The Challenge of Blackness* and *The Shaping of Black America*.¹⁰³¹ Bennett's assertion that black people could not escape 'the meaning history gave you and that history demands from you' echoed the sentiments of historians such as Arturo Schomburg, who had famously argued that the black American 'must remake his past in order to make his future.'¹⁰³² More importantly, it rejected the appropriation of black history by white commentators and media outlets, to contend that an 'honest' interpretation of black history was based on an understanding that black Americans lived in a 'different reality' to non-black Americans.¹⁰³³

As Pero Dagbovie has noted in *African American History Reconsidered*, Bennett's writing during the early 1980s formalised his firm belief that black history 'needed to be functional, pragmatic, and this-worldly in orientation.'¹⁰³⁴ Readers applauded Bennett for discarding the 'myth of objectivity' which had 'hamstrung our historians and journalists', to recognise the unique implications of black history for black Americans.¹⁰³⁵ Bennett returned to this idea in a February 1982 article titled 'Why Black History Is Important To You.' He contended that 'by telling us who we are, history tells us what we can do. By telling us where we have been, history tells us where we can go.'¹⁰³⁶ Perhaps the most powerful articulation of Bennett's historical philosophy came through

¹⁰³¹ Bennett, *The Shaping of Black America*, preface.

¹⁰³² Schomburg, *The Negro Digs Up His Past*, 670.

¹⁰³³ Clarke, "Review of *The Shaping of Black America*," Box 34, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

¹⁰³⁴ Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 41.

¹⁰³⁵ Larry Coleman to Lerone Bennett, 3 February 1981, Box 34, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

¹⁰³⁶ Bennett, "Why Black History Is Important To You," *Ebony* 1982, 61.

an article in February 1985 titled 'A Living History: Voices of the Past Speak to the Present.' In response to the furore surrounding the King Holiday, Bennett warned that 'before confronting us as a spectacle or a celebration, black history is a challenge and a call.'¹⁰³⁷ In imagining history as a call and response, Bennett linked it to a recognisably African American form of expression and exchange, but also emphasised its power as a political act. He contended that black Americans must not be distracted by the celebration of black history, but must continue to heed the voices of King and other black pioneers, which reminded them 'how they got over and what we must do to overcome.'¹⁰³⁸

As the nation prepared to formally observe the King Holiday for the first time, Bennett sought to reiterate the Holiday's true significance within the broader tapestry of black history. In an article titled 'The Real Meaning of the King Holiday' in January 1986, Bennett declared that the Holiday would force Americans of all races and political persuasions 'to take official notice not only of Martin Luther King, Jr., but also the maids, the sharecroppers, the students and the Rosa Parkses who made him what he was.'¹⁰³⁹ The editor played on racialised fears of black criminality popularised by the Reagan administration to emphasise King's significance, but also to remind readers that freedom had to be taken, not given.¹⁰⁴⁰ Bennett championed celebrated King and other activists who 'broke into American history like beneficent burglars, bringing with them the gifts of vision, passion and truth.' Furthermore, he reiterated that 'this is not a

¹⁰³⁷ Bennett, "A Living History," 27.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰³⁹ Bennett, "The Real Meaning of the King Holiday," 31.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Bostdorff and Goldzwig, "History, Collective Memory, and the Appropriation of Martin Luther King," 662.

holiday for rest and frivolity and play. This is a day for study, struggle, and preparation for the victory to come.¹⁰⁴¹

The January 1986 issue of *Ebony* also featured a special section on 'The Living King', which used King's own words to offer a critique of Reagan's policies toward civil rights and welfare reform. Reprinting a series of quotes from King which spoke to 'contemporary problems and struggles', *Ebony* offered an explicit rejection of Reagan's criticism of progressive hiring quotas. Under the heading of 'Affirmative Action', the magazine printed a quotation which declared that 'no amount of gold could provide an adequate compensation for the exploitation and humiliation of the Negro in America...the payment should be in the form of a massive program by the government of special, compensatory measures.'¹⁰⁴² Scholars such as Michael Eric Dyson has pointed to this quote to argue that, for King, affirmative action was just one aspect of a radical vision for economic redistribution and 'the goal of human equality.'¹⁰⁴³

Furthermore, many of the quotes which were printed in 'The Living King' emphasised his radical critique of American society and values. Among them was King's critique of American life which had been taken up by Bennett in his address to the trustees of the King Center in 1970: 'the black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes. It is forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws – racism, poverty, militarism and materialism.'¹⁰⁴⁴ George Lipsitz has argued that these words demonstrated how race-based mobilisations of the black freedom struggle had prompted King into 'a radical

¹⁰⁴¹ Bennett, "The Real Meaning of the King Holiday," 31.

¹⁰⁴² "The Living King", *Ebony*, January 1986, 62.

¹⁰⁴³ Dyson, *Debating Race with Michael Eric Dyson* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007), 85-86.

¹⁰⁴⁴ "The Living King," 62.

critique of society that went beyond the particular and parochial concerns of African Americans.¹⁰⁴⁵ The decision to print such quotes in *Ebony* echoed the sentiments of Adam Fairclough and other historians who had emphasised King's 'deep political radicalism' in the build-up to the King Holiday.¹⁰⁴⁶ In doing so, it provided a highly visible rebuttal to the hegemonic image of King which had come to dominate civil rights narratives by the mid-1980s.¹⁰⁴⁷

Black History and the Crisis of the 'New Generation'

Through Bennett's discussion of the 'living King' and the decision to print quotes which emphasised King's radical socialism, it appeared that *Ebony* offered a firm rejection of Reagan's attempts to appropriate King's legacy. Yet Bennett's work also affirmed his concerns over the future of black history which he had begun to express with greater clarity during the second half of the 1970s. By centralising King within his understanding of black history as a 'living history', Bennett suggested that the solution to the 'crisis of the black spirit' rested in a rededication to King's own moral values and social activism. From this perspective, an awareness of and commitment to King's legacy, as exhibited by black youth, was seen as a litmus test for their ability to carry the movement forward.

This sentiment had been taken up by other contributors to *Ebony* such as Patrice Gaines-Carter, who had published an article in September 1985 under the provocative heading of 'Is My 'Post-Integration' Daughter Black Enough?' Written as an open letter to her daughter, Gaines-Carter's article envisioned the generational divide over King's memory as evidence of the 'post-integration

¹⁰⁴⁵ George Lipsitz, "Blood Lines and Blood Shed," in *A Concise Companion to American Studies*, ed. John Carlos Rowe (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 154.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Fairclough, "Was Martin Luther King a Marxist?" *History Workshop* 15 (1983): 184.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," 1233.

blues' suffered by black youth during the 1970s and 1980s. When the author announced that King's birthday was coming up and the family should 'do something special' to commemorate it, she bemoaned her daughter's reply of 'that's the only day I'll get to sleep late.'¹⁰⁴⁸

The responses of *Ebony's* readers to Gaines-Carter's article were mixed, but appeared to bear out her fears over a generational divide. Younger readers such as Stacey Moorehead and Glenys Rogers were respectful but critical in their responses, and asked Gaines-Carter not to resent the younger generation because they now had white friends or listened to 'white' music. To younger readers, these new opportunities were simply evidence that they were reaping the benefits of their parents struggle for civil rights.¹⁰⁴⁹ By contrast, a number of older readers expressed a sense of regret over the lack of historical awareness exhibited by post-civil rights black youth. Alphonso Galloway contended that the article was 'perhaps the best story *Ebony* has ever published', and declared it a travesty that 'our black youth of today know more about Michael Jackson, Prince and Eddie Murphy than Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Rosa Parks.'¹⁰⁵⁰

The irony of Galloway's response was that it ignored *Ebony's* longstanding elevation of black actors and entertainers over civil rights activists and political campaigners. In 1982 Bennett requested a list of the personalities who had appeared on *Ebony's* cover since the magazine's first issue in 1945. In the memo he received from the JPC Library, twenty-five black personalities had appeared on the cover five or more times. Yet King was the only one of these

¹⁰⁴⁸ Patrice Gaines-Carter, "Is My 'Post-Integration' Daughter Black Enough?," *Ebony*, September 1985, 54.

¹⁰⁴⁹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, November 1985, 11-18.

¹⁰⁵⁰ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1985, 17.

figures who could be primarily identified as a political campaigner or civil rights activist.¹⁰⁵¹ Even at the height of *Ebony's* engagement with the movement during the 1960s, its cover continued to be predominantly populated by black actors, musicians and sports-stars.

Furthermore, Bennett's criticisms of the 'new generation' for an apparent turn away from black history were interwoven with his broader dissatisfaction over apparent shifts in black moral and cultural values. He ominously warned that the 'post-revolutionary trauma' induced by the fragmentation of the civil rights movement had led to the 'widespread debasement of black popular culture.'¹⁰⁵² As early as 1971 Bennett had bemoaned that films such as *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* had twisted the activism of the 1960s into a debased sense of black cultural power.¹⁰⁵³ By the mid-seventies he had turned his attention to funk, attacking its messages of 'freakiness, hustling, and social disorder.'¹⁰⁵⁴ Such outbursts betrayed a tension between Bennett's radical political and economic critique of American society, and his deference to conservative black sexual and cultural politics. This tension was addressed by Ellis Cose in his review of *The Shaping of Black America*, where he noted that Bennett's text was 'as much of a sermon as it is an essay', and desired at times 'to cut through the morality, to see the substance bereft of the spirit.'¹⁰⁵⁵

Through his depiction of the 'living King', Bennett presented King as both a radical and conservative leader - a figure who was committed to a restructuring of the American economy and of American society, but who was

¹⁰⁵¹ As of August 1982 King had appeared on *Ebony's* cover a total of 5 times. Pam Ash to Lerone Bennett, 10 August 1982, Box 13, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

¹⁰⁵² Bennett, "The Crisis of the Black Spirit," 143.

¹⁰⁵³ Bennett, "The Emancipation Orgasm," *Ebony*, September 1971, 106.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Bennett, "The Crisis of the Black Spirit," 143.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Cose, "Review of *The Shaping of Black America*," Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

also a moral beacon who could lead black America through immoral times. Accordingly, while his radical social vision offered a rejection of the colourblind King imagined by Reagan, Bennett's writing also consolidated a predominantly conservative vision of the black past, which was rooted in a 'providential view of a God-controlled black history.'¹⁰⁵⁶ From this perspective, King's dream relied on black Americans 'keeping the faith of our fathers and mothers.'¹⁰⁵⁷ Accordingly, he could assume his place alongside Frederick Douglass and other men who were 'claimed as father figures for their strength and commitment to uplifting the race.'¹⁰⁵⁸

Bennett's understanding of black history as a 'living history' was one which relied on continuity, not change. This was encapsulated through his metaphor of black history as a relay, which he articulated in 'Listen to the Blood.'¹⁰⁵⁹ In this vision of black progress, each generation 'runs as fast as it can and then passes the baton on, *ad infinitum*.' Because of this commitment, the current generation became responsible not only for their own progress, but for 'the whole of the black experience. For it is only through us that the dreams of the past can be fulfilled.'¹⁰⁶⁰ However, while this metaphor underscored Bennett's belief in history as a cyclical process, it also demonstrated the limitations of this philosophy, and the restrictions placed on the current generation by the historical demands and social values of their ancestors.

This position becomes more problematic when we consider the broader tensions between Bennett's depiction of a 'living history' and *Ebony's*

¹⁰⁵⁶ Bennett, "Listen to the Blood," 35.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Bennett, "The Real Meaning of the King Holiday," 31.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Michael E. Connor and Joseph L. White, "Fatherhood in Contemporary Black America: Invisible but Present," in *Black Fathers: An Invisible Presence in America*, ed. Connor and White (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 8.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Bennett, "Listen to the Blood," 42.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

sensationalised coverage of a number of 'crises' within the black community. As noted earlier in this chapter, *Ebony's* content had become increasingly concerned with points of potential emotional or psychological crisis within the black family and black community in the years following King's death. From the late 1970s onwards, this anxiety would be channelled into a series of special issues which paralleled the ongoing fight for the King Holiday. This included 'Black on Black Crime' (1979), 'Blacks and the Money Crunch' (1980), 'The Crisis of the Black Male' (1983), and 'The Crisis of the Black Family' (1986). Underpinned by Bennett's conception of a 'living history', such 'crisis' special issues were rooted in a nostalgic vision of black collective action, social norms and family values. Thus, the response to the 'black male crisis' of the 1980s should be developed 'within the heroic tradition of black males' throughout history.¹⁰⁶¹

Through declaring that a return to the moral high ground of previous black generations was essential to resolve the social and moral dilemmas facing the black population during the 1980s, Bennett's conception of a 'living history' can be seen to have intersected with elements of Reagan's social agenda.¹⁰⁶² An important plank in Reagan's electoral platform was 'a return to traditional moral, religious and family American values' and the suggestion that social ills such as 'poor education, crime, juvenile delinquency and abortion' were rooted in an abandonment of these values.¹⁰⁶³ For Bennett, this commitment to a heteronormative black family and the upkeep of moral values was a necessary aspect for continuing the 'ancient racial dialogue' of black

¹⁰⁶¹ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1983, 36.

¹⁰⁶² Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 135-136.

¹⁰⁶³ Joseph Hogan, *The Reagan Years: the Record in Presidential Leadership* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 208.

history.¹⁰⁶⁴ Yet Reagan's promotion of conservative Christian values both 'authorized and fuelled the administration's embrace of the New Right' and a 'politics of personal responsibility' which shifted blame for social problems toward the individual.¹⁰⁶⁵

The connection between King's memory and a celebration of conservative family values was reinforced in the months following *Ebony's* January 1986 issue on the 'Living King', and in particular through its 1986 special issue on 'The Crisis of the Black Family.' Johnson contended that a resolution to this family crisis was predicated on a return to a nostalgic sense of familial responsibility under slavery and 'to the high ground of the black founding fathers and mothers.'¹⁰⁶⁶ The cover picture presented an image of a heteronormative black family, with a black father figure flanked by his wife and two children. Five months later, *Ebony's* cover echoed this image through a picture of the King family as 'keepers of the dream.' King's place at the head of the family had been taken up by his sons Martin Luther King III and Dexter Scott, who were flanked by their sisters Bernice and Yolanda, and their mother Coretta.¹⁰⁶⁷

When placed within this context, Bennett's depiction of the 'Living King' arguably helped to reinforce conservative appeals to family values, even as it rejected Reagan's attempts to position King as an arbiter for colourblind conservatism. Similarly, his appeals to the 'high ground' of black historical exceptionalism evoked Reagan's own vision of American exceptionalism as 'the

¹⁰⁶⁴ Bennett, "The Lost/Found Generation," 35.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Kellie Bean, *Post-Backlash Feminism: Women and the Media since Reagan-Bush* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2007), 18.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1986, 30.

¹⁰⁶⁷ "Cover," *Ebony*, January 1987.

shining city on the hill.¹⁰⁶⁸ As part of his rejection of the colourblind King endorsed by Reagan, Bennett argued that every black American had a moral obligation to carry on King's legacy: 'It is on this deep level, and in the context of personal responsibilities, that the King Holiday assumes its true meaning.'¹⁰⁶⁹ However, by utilising the rhetoric of personal responsibility, and suggesting that problems within black America were connected to a decline in black moral and spiritual values, Bennett's rhetoric echoed that of Reagan, and reinforced his depiction of King as both a radical and conservative black hero.

Black Historical Nostalgia and *Ebony* as a Frame for Colourblindness

Bennett's suggestion that the social and cultural ills of black America were in some way connected to a turn away from King's spiritual leadership can be linked to an essentially conservative strand of black intellectual thought which glorified a nostalgic vision of black fraternity and 'brotherhood.' In a physical sense, this has manifested itself through the valorisation of historic black enclaves such as Bronzeville and Harlem. Michelle Boyd has described this longing for a 'racial refuge' which enabled black Americans to attend to their own needs as a form of 'Jim Crow nostalgia.'¹⁰⁷⁰ More broadly this sentiment, as expressed below by Cornel West, betrays a yearning for romanticised vision of black identity which was created and nurtured by the hardship of slavery and segregation.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: the Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 795.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Bennett, "The Real Meaning of the King Holiday," 31.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia*, xii.

Black people once put a premium on serving the community, lifting others, and finding joy in empowering others. Today, most Black people have succumbed to individualistic projects in pursuit of wealth, health, and status. Black people once had a strong prophetic tradition of lifting every voice. Today, most Black people engage in the petty practise of chasing dollars.¹⁰⁷¹

Bennett would return to this idea repeatedly during the 1980s, with his coverage of black history frequently exhibiting a sense of nostalgia for black familial and communal unity engendered by slavery and Jim Crow. In looking for a response to the ‘crisis of the black spirit’, he argued that blacks needed to ‘get back to that spirit of community that sustained blacks in slavery and in the old communities of the South.’¹⁰⁷² This position was reinforced by market surveys commissioned by the magazine, which reported that the attitudes of the ‘new generation’ towards subjects such as sex and drugs were markedly more liberal than their parents, and connected this to a lack of appreciation for the ‘dramatic days of the civil rights struggle.’¹⁰⁷³ Yet whether by accident or design, such a notion privileged a romanticised vision of black history which implied that historical oppression had cultivated generations of black Americans who were ‘inevitably kind and generous to their peers.’¹⁰⁷⁴

This sentiment was increasingly taken up by the magazine’s audience, who reminisced over black collectivity during the years prior to integration. In response to ‘Is My Post-Civil Rights Daughter Black Enough?’, Ondria Thompson admitted that the article had evoked a curious ‘feeling of nostalgia’ for a period in black history that was often ‘disgusting, sad and downright

¹⁰⁷¹ Cornel West and Christa Buschendorf, *Black Prophetic Fire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 1.

¹⁰⁷² Bennett, “The Crisis of the Black Sprit,” 144.

¹⁰⁷³ A Survey Among Young Blacks, Conducted for *Ebony* Magazine by the Roper Organization, June 1978, Box 24, Doris E. Saunders Papers.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History*, xvi.

frightening.¹⁰⁷⁵ Similarly, readers such as Pamela Dunn offered a nostalgic vision of the King Holiday movement which echoed the halcyon days of the 1960s. Dunn asked the magazine's readers to 'remember when black was beautiful?', before pointing to the movement for the King Holiday as evidence that 'we still have the power – "Black Power." It is there just as strong and just as beautiful.'¹⁰⁷⁶ Through this declaration, Dunn reduced an understanding of Black Power as a radical redistribution of wealth and resources to the self-contained and commercially mediated commemoration of an individual figure.

Furthermore, whilst *Ebony's* coverage looked to contest the hegemonic version of the King Holiday which positioned him 'primarily as "just another" heroic figure of American individualism', it also helped to homogenise the diverse response of black Americans to his commemoration.¹⁰⁷⁷ This can be seen through articles such as 'What Martin Luther King Jr. Means to Me' in *Ebony's* January 1986 issue, which underscored the generational and class biases in its coverage of the King Holiday.¹⁰⁷⁸ Only one of the ten figures profiled in the feature was under the age of 45 – Olympic gold medallist Evelyn Ashford.¹⁰⁷⁹ In her earnest description of King as a 'symbol of hope to us and our children', Ashford was hardly representative of many in the 'new generation' who appeared ambivalent to the symbolism of the King Holiday. Rather than address the ways in which the King Holiday appeared to alienate younger and lower-class African Americans, *Ebony* chose instead to celebrate those

¹⁰⁷⁵ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, December 1985, 17.

¹⁰⁷⁶ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, May 1981, 12.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Merelman, *Representing Black Culture*, 77.

¹⁰⁷⁸ "What Martin Luther King Jr. Means to Me," *Ebony*, January 1986, 74.

¹⁰⁷⁹ The figures featured in the article were Ralph Abernathy, Evelyn Ashford, Howard Baker, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Dorothy Height, Jesse Jackson, T.J. Jemison, Edward Kennedy, Joseph Lowery and Andrew Young.

members of the 'new generation' who were strong advocates of the Holiday, such as Stevie Wonder and King's own children.

The lack of attention given to black critics of the King Holiday by *Ebony* was indicative of its broader reluctance to provide space for arguments which went against its own understanding of the Holiday's significance. This paralleled its marginalisation of black conservatives who looked to distance themselves 'from ideas, policies and institutions that couched the issues confronting black America in collectivist terms.'¹⁰⁸⁰ For example, in contrast to *Ebony's* previous celebration of blacks in government, the role of Clarence Thomas as chairman of the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission earned him only the most fleeting of recognition within the magazine.¹⁰⁸¹ Yet this partisan response meant that important intersections between corporate capitalism, black conservative thought, and colourblind political rhetoric were silenced or ignored. Johnson was unwilling to profile black conservatives within Reagan's administration, but was happy to appear in adverts alongside Joe Black, who suggested that black underemployment was not the result of discrimination, but of 'ignorance and inadequate training.'¹⁰⁸²

As scholars such as Robin Kelley have noted, divisions within the black community have historically proved vital in the cultivation of cultural and political agency and diversity.¹⁰⁸³ However, *Ebony's* desire to present a unified response to perceived crises, and its deference to respectability politics, served to stifle this agency. A clear example of this can be seen through the magazine's response to the AIDS epidemic during the 1980s, which largely focused on how

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ondaatje, *Black Conservative Intellectuals in Modern America*, 6.

¹⁰⁸¹ "Highest Paid Black Public Officials," *Ebony*, April 1985, 50

¹⁰⁸² "Greyhound," *Ebony*, November 1981, 8-9; Marable, "The Black Elite vs. Reaganism," *Afro-American*, 9 October 1982, 5.

¹⁰⁸³ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 1-5.

AIDS had affected middle class heterosexual blacks.¹⁰⁸⁴ As a result, Cathy Cohen has argued that even as *Ebony* helped to counteract racialised mainstream narratives of the epidemic, it 'let stand, and in some cases reinforced, processes of secondary marginalization and ideologies of otherness that designated certain segments of the community as not worthy of group resources, activism or coverage.'¹⁰⁸⁵ Through doing so, *Ebony's* coverage of the AIDS epidemic echoed the earlier biases of Bennett's black history coverage, and the attitudes of 'black family experts' such as Alvin Poussaint.

More significantly still, *Ebony's* commitment to documenting 'the happier side of Negro life' meant that the magazine could be held up as 'evidence' of the very colourblind ideology Bennett sought to reject.¹⁰⁸⁶ Through its enduring promotion of black celebrity, middle-class aspiration and black achievement, *Ebony* acted as a 'crucial site in the deployment of frames of colorblindness', and as justification of the nation's progress toward a colourblind society.¹⁰⁸⁷ The achievements of individual black celebrities profiled through *Ebony's* pages functioned as evidence that the continued struggles of the black majority, whose failures were nothing more than a 'combination of bad behaviour, overreliance on government, and a failure to take personal responsibility.'¹⁰⁸⁸ This role was reinforced by an upswing in the magazine's own fortunes during the 1980s. Armistead Scott Pride and Clint Wilson have argued that black newspapers went out of business 'at an alarming rate' during the Reagan era.¹⁰⁸⁹ By

¹⁰⁸⁴ Cathy Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 226-230.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁰⁸⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1945, 2.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 186; David J. Leonard, *Screens Fade to Black: Contemporary African American Cinema* (Westport: Praeger, 2006), 8.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ondaatje, *Black Conservative Intellectuals in Modern America*, 6.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Pride and Wilson, *A History of the Black Press*, 246.

contrast, *Ebony's* circulation jumped from around 1.3 million at the beginning of Reagan's administration to nearly 1.9 million by the time he left office.¹⁰⁹⁰

In turn, we can see how *Ebony's* engagement with King's memory helped to bolster its inadvertent role as a frame for colourblindness. The magazine's desire to utilise King's appeal as a panacea for the perceived social and moral ills of the black community meant that the tensions and complexities which underpinned his appeal became collated. Indeed, even as Bennett warned that King should be remembered 'not with legends and poems and wreathes of bronze alone', *Ebony* celebrated the proliferation of physical monuments which served as a 'constant reminder of the man and of the cause' for which he fought.¹⁰⁹¹ Similarly, by downplaying the diversity of black responses to the King Holiday, *Ebony* contributed to a homogenised image of King as a 'drum major for justice' which fed into a hegemonic and transcendent narrative of his legacy.¹⁰⁹²

This tension was exacerbated by the magazine's advertisers, who looked to celebrate King's legacy in broad, deferential and depoliticised terms. Advertisers such as McDonalds generically declared that the celebration of the King Holiday was evidence that 'his light still shines.'¹⁰⁹³ Similarly, 7Up promoted the holiday as a justification that 'some dreams never die', while Sears contended that 'the highest honor we can give him is to work to make his dream come true.'¹⁰⁹⁴ Such abstract appeals to King's 'dream' enabled advertisers to rearticulate King's call for radical economic redistribution into the

¹⁰⁹⁰ "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, January 1981, 20; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, December 1990, 145.

¹⁰⁹¹ Bennett, "The Real Meaning of the King Holiday," 31; "In Memory of Martin Luther King, Jr.," *Ebony*, January 1986, 64-68.

¹⁰⁹² Seay, "A Prophet with Honor?," 255.

¹⁰⁹³ "McDonalds," *Ebony*, January 1986, 33; "McDonalds," *Ebony*, January 1987, 69.

¹⁰⁹⁴ "7Up," *Ebony*, January 1986, 43; "Sears," *Ebony*, January 1987, 73.

promotion of corporate capitalism. In doing so, they reiterated Reagan's belief that a realisation of King's 'dream' was underpinned by de-regulating the marketplace and expanding minority entrepreneurship.¹⁰⁹⁵

Furthermore, just as Reagan had appropriated King's rhetoric to call for a 'colorblind society', so too did advertisers situate King's legacy within conservative narratives of race, colourblindness, and personal responsibility. Greyhound declared that 'brotherhood is not a black or a white issue', and that it was only through a rededication to colourblind ideals, in the guise of 'brotherhood', that Americans could avoid a return to the racial prejudice of the past.¹⁰⁹⁶ Similarly, adverts from IBM expressed an admiration for a man 'who didn't see the world in black and white.'¹⁰⁹⁷ This sentiment was taken up by AT&T, who encouraged readers to 'be a King for a day' by attempting to ignore race, and to instead seeing each person 'as a brother or sister.'¹⁰⁹⁸ For some advertisers, this process extended to black history itself. In contrast to Bennett's contention that black history necessitated 'a different insight and frame of reference', Anheuser-Busch argued that 'a real picture of being black in America includes all of us.'¹⁰⁹⁹

Conclusion

Such advertising campaigns added another layer to *Ebony's* multivalent engagement with King's memory, and its depiction of the 'real meaning' of the King Holiday. On the one hand, *Ebony* looked to reject conservative appropriation of King's rhetoric. Both through its use of King's own words, and

¹⁰⁹⁵ Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Martin Luther King, Jr., and Black Americans," 18 January 1986, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/11886b.htm>.

¹⁰⁹⁶ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, February 1982, 8.

¹⁰⁹⁷ "IBM," *Ebony*, January 1987, 29; "IBM," *Ebony*, January 1988, 29.

¹⁰⁹⁸ "AT&T," *Ebony*, January 1986, 55; "AT&T," *Ebony*, January 1987, 33.

¹⁰⁹⁹ "Anheuser-Busch," *Ebony*, January 1986, 99; Clarke, "Review of The Shaping of Black America," Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

through Bennett's depiction of King's place within the black historical canon, *Ebony* looked to counter hegemonic depictions of King as a racially transcendent American hero. Yet at the same moment, other elements of the magazine's editorial and advertising content positioned it as an influential frame for colourblind rhetoric.

On both an individual and a collective level, *Ebony's* coverage of the movement to establish a King Holiday became an influential part of the magazine's contested and frequently ambiguous engagement with black history. The continuing influence of Bennett over *Ebony's* historical coverage during the 1980s, as evidenced through a series of major articles on the form and function of black history, confirmed his establishment as one of the nation's most prominent black historians.¹¹⁰⁰ As many of the magazine's readers acknowledged, his articles reiterated King's place within a broader historical narrative, and raised 'profound insights and questions about the centuries-old struggle for black people' against misrepresentation and racial oppression.¹¹⁰¹ However, Bennett's engagement with King's legacy also underscored his socially conservative black history philosophy, which can be mapped onto Reagan's own appeals to family values and historical nostalgia.

These tensions were symptomatic of *Ebony's* broader relationship to the production of black history and African American historical memory, but also the anxieties and tensions which underpinned the communal black response to King's memory during the 1970s and 1980s. In this respect, *Ebony* was arguably successful in its attempts to function as a 'microcosm of black America.' Even as the magazine sought to discredit an 'exterior' perspective on

¹¹⁰⁰ Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 39

¹¹⁰¹ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, April 1981 15; "Letters to the Editor", *Ebony*, May 1981, 15-17.

King's life which sought to present him as 'just another' hero of American individualism, it produced its own form of black hegemonic memory.¹¹⁰² Its syncretic representation of the 'real meaning' of the King Holiday underscored the 'commemorative complexities' which underpinned responses to King's memory from both inside and outside the black community.¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰² Merelman, *Representing Black Culture*, 77.

¹¹⁰³ Alderman, "Street Names and the Scaling of Memory," 237.

CONCLUSION:

Ebony's coverage of the King Holiday during the mid-1980s overlapped with another significant milestone: its own fortieth anniversary. At over 360 pages long, *Ebony's* November 1985 issue was the largest issue of the magazine published since its 1963 special on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. The size and scope of the 40th anniversary issue reinforced *Ebony's* position as the nation's biggest and most influential black periodical. At the dawn of the 1960s the magazine's monthly circulation had hovered around 600,000.¹¹⁰⁴ A quarter of a century later this circulation had almost tripled, and its editors claimed a pass-on readership of over 8 million.¹¹⁰⁵ *Ebony* pointed to market research which suggested that it was read by over forty percent of adult black American's every month; the 'highest market penetration of any general interest magazine in the nation.'¹¹⁰⁶

Ebony's rise to the pinnacle of the magazine industry had both underpinned and embodied the growth of JPC as a whole. By the second half of the 1980s the company had become an expansive business conglomerate which included numerous periodicals, a book division, two radio stations, a cosmetics lines, and a nationally syndicated television show.¹¹⁰⁷ JPC had overtaken Motown as the highest grossing black-owned business in the country, employed more black employees than any other black-owned company, and Johnson had become the first African American to be named on the Forbes 400

¹¹⁰⁴ "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1959, 24; "Backstage," *Ebony*, May 1960, 24.

¹¹⁰⁵ "Backstage," *Ebony*, April 1983, 28; "Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation," *Ebony*, December 1985, 23.

¹¹⁰⁶ "Backstage," *Ebony*, March 1985, 24.

¹¹⁰⁷ Ethel Payne, "Johnson Success Colors Ebony," *Afro-American*, 25 May 1985, 5.

list.¹¹⁰⁸ When asked about how he wanted to be remembered by future historians, the publisher expressed his desire to be measured against *Ebony's* own success in bringing black history to a popular audience.

I hope they will say that we gave black people faith and confidence in themselves and that we told them about their great heritage...that we brought to life, through the historical articles and the books we published, the great black leaders of the past, and that we gave young people the feeling that if our ancestors could do it...then we can do it today.¹¹⁰⁹

As this thesis has demonstrated, *Ebony* became an influential voice for the production and dissemination of popular black history from the late 1950s onwards. It provided new historical perspectives to a vast readership, and helped to reconfigure how readers understood their own history, their role in the struggle for racial equality, and the relationship between the two.¹¹¹⁰ The magazine became an intermediary location between black activist and intellectual circles and the cultural mainstream, within which diverse and frequently dynamic depictions of black history could be recovered, revised and rearticulated. It became a communal space for debates into black historical representation; an extended black history reading group where contributors and readers could offer support for, or a rejection of, popular representations of the black past.

While Johnson deserves recognition for helping to facilitate the magazine's expanding coverage of black history, he played little part in its editorial production. As Adam Green has noted, a scholarly focus on Johnson has frequently obscured the ways in which *Ebony's* content was the 'shared

¹¹⁰⁸ By 1985 JPC employed nearly 1,800 workers, the vast majority of whom were black. "Backstage," *Ebony*, November 1985, 360; Philip Dougherty, "Advertising: *Ebony's* Search For Attention," *New York Times*, 16 October 1984, D30.

¹¹⁰⁹ "The *Ebony* interview with John H. Johnson," *Ebony*, November 1985, 58.

¹¹¹⁰ Harding, "Power From Our People," 49.

accomplishment of an eclectically diverse and talented staff; one whose varied experiences and social orientation equipped it to represent postwar black life in uniquely ambitious ways.¹¹¹¹ This statement also applied to the magazine's historical content, which was supplemented and supported by a diverse cast of writers from both inside and outside the publication. However, from the late 1950s onwards the figure at the heart of *Ebony's* historical production and direction was Lerone Bennett, Jr.

Two years before the magazine's fortieth anniversary special, Bennett had marked his own thirtieth anniversary at JPC. In a letter to his senior editor, Johnson declared that working with Bennett had proved to be 'one of the most rewarding experiences' of his professional career.¹¹¹² Since the early 1960s Bennett had contributed six major black history series to *Ebony* and published nine book-length studies through the Johnson Book Division. He had evolved his understanding of black history as a 'living history', and had moved towards 'defining and interpreting history consistently from a black perspective.'¹¹¹³ In the process, he had solidified his status as a 'pioneering black nationalist historian' and as perhaps 'the most widely read popular historian in the African American community.'¹¹¹⁴ Based on my unprecedented access to Bennett's archives at Chicago State and Emory, this study has shed new light on the centrality, and complexity, of Bennett's role in cementing *Ebony's* role as a 'history book' for its vast audience.¹¹¹⁵

¹¹¹¹ Green, *Selling the Race*, 15.

¹¹¹² John Johnson to Lerone Bennett, Box 1, Lerone Bennett Papers.

¹¹¹³ Washington, "Lerone Bennett Jr.," Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

¹¹¹⁴ Asante, *The African American People*, 367; Jeffrey Helgeson, *Crucibles of Black Empowerment: Chicago's Neighborhood Politics from the New Deal to Harold Washington* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 198.

¹¹¹⁵ Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 208.

This sentiment was reflected through responses to the fortieth anniversary special, which applauded its historical significance. Floridian Ernestine Foster declared that she would treasure the issue as ‘a black history reference book.’¹¹¹⁶ Otis Hollingsworth echoed this sentiment, praising *Ebony* for documenting ‘the history of our great people and our struggle for freedom.’ Louisiana native Ollie White stressed its educational value, asserting that it was ‘the best history book’ black children could read to ‘see where we have come from and how we got here.’¹¹¹⁷ Michigan reader Ruth McDowell went even further, contending that the anniversary issue was ‘a witness, a revelation, a history and a prophecy to the world.’¹¹¹⁸ Through such rhetoric, these letters echoed the praise of earlier readers, who had situated *Ebony*’s content on the boundaries of book history and popular black history.

Ebony and the Boundaries of Black History

However, even as this response highlighted the magazine’s continuing importance as an archive for black life and history, it also betrayed a longing for a sense of historic black collectivism. The combined impact of affirmative action, deindustrialisation, desegregation, suburbanisation and urban decay had both decimated and elevated different sections of the black community during the post-civil rights years. By the end of the 1980s, it appeared that ‘symbolism, history and old-fashioned racism’ were just about the only things many black citizens still had in common.¹¹¹⁹ Readers such as Arthur Dunkin confided that while he was undoubtedly lucky to have been raised in the post-civil rights years, he also felt ‘most unfortunate because I never had the opportunity to

¹¹¹⁶ “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, January 1986, 12.

¹¹¹⁷ “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, February 1986, 17.

¹¹¹⁸ “Letters to the Editor,” *Ebony*, January 1986, 12.

¹¹¹⁹ Eugene Robinson, *Disintegration: the Splintering of Black America* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 4.

meet some of the people who had the most profound impact on Black America.¹¹²⁰ In a similar vein, *Ebony's* response to the continuing challenges faced by African Americans during the 1970s and 1980s often led to a romanticisation of its own history, and of black history as a whole. Johnson declared that 'because of our history, because of the troubles we have seen and the triumphs we have recorded, we face the future with confidence and hope.'¹¹²¹

This unified vision of black history can be understood as an essentially conservative concept which implied that historical oppression had been vital to a strong sense of racial solidarity.¹¹²² In addition to silencing the role of intra-group conflict in promoting group agency and diversity, this sentiment also privileged a homogenous vision of black cultural and moral values.¹¹²³ This was made explicit through *Ebony's* 1986 special on 'The Crisis of the Black Family', which warned of a series of crisis, including economic distress, drug abuse and urban pathology, which had 'undermined the social infrastructure of Black America, creating sociosexual challenges of unprecedented magnitude.'¹¹²⁴ In response to this crisis, Johnson called for a return to 'the high ground of the black founding fathers and mothers' and a rededication to the moral and spiritual leadership of activists such as King.¹¹²⁵

From both an ideological and philosophical perspective, Bennett's coverage of black history in *Ebony* can be seen to have evolved significantly between the beginning of the 1960s and the middle of the 1980s. He had

¹¹²⁰ "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony*, January 1986, 12.

¹¹²¹ "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, November 1985, 37.

¹¹²² Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia*, xii.

¹¹²³ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 1-5.

¹¹²⁴ "The Controversy," *Ebony*, August 1986, 33.

¹¹²⁵ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, August 1986, 30.

moved away from early attempts to adopt a more objective and detached approach, towards a 'more subjective and interpretative' understanding of black history by the 1970s.¹¹²⁶ This shift underpinned his depiction of the 'living King' during the 1980s, which reiterated his belief in the power of black history to function as an effective critique of black experiences in the present. Similarly, whereas earlier readers had looked to reinforce Bennett's scholarly credentials through appeals to historical objectivity or professional creditability, articles such as 'Listen to the Blood' were applauded for 'crushing the myth' of objectivity to approach history unapologetically from a 'black perspective.'¹¹²⁷ However, Bennett's enduring deference to a socially conservative depiction of black history was less well-equipped to deal with the transformations in black sexual and cultural politics during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

In the preface to the sixth edition of *Before the Mayflower* published in 1987, Bennett remarked that 'historians and history books are historical. They are products of history. They are born at a certain time, and they bind time and express time and their times.'¹¹²⁸ For Bennett, the most important years in his historical development had come during the late 1960s and early 1970s; between the publication of *Black Power* in 1967, and *The Shaping of Black America* in 1975. However, Bennett's relationship to Black Power and black liberation served to both emancipate and mediate his understanding of black history's importance, and its relevance to the African American condition. Furthermore, his writing underpinned *Ebony's* broader historical entrenchment, which was predicated, in part, upon the nostalgic vision of a unified black

¹¹²⁶ Washington, "Lerone Bennett Jr.," Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

¹¹²⁷ Larry Coleman to Lerone Bennett, 3 February 1981, Box 34, Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers.

¹¹²⁸

community that reinforced underlying hierarchies of race, class, sex and gender.¹¹²⁹

It is telling that in looking to black history to dispel the 'great man' mythology of King, Bennett had confirmed the heroic status of 'pioneer black historians' such as Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson and Washington Williams.¹¹³⁰ Through his own contributions to *Ebony*, Bennett had reinforced the construction of a patrilineal black history. That is not to say that Bennett had failed to honour the contributions of black women throughout history – far from it. Through his coverage of black female pioneers such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, Bennett had celebrated the revolutionary role of black women in the struggle for racial equality. However, his coverage of black history was frequently centred on the recovery of heroic black masculinity. More broadly, whether through its coverage of Frederick Douglass as the 'father of the protest movement', or through its engagement with 'The Black Revolution', *Ebony's* coverage of protest – both past and present – was often centred on the role of black men.¹¹³¹

This deference toward a particular vision of black history can be situated within the bloodlines of *Ebony's* own editorial team. Through new corporate projects and publishing endeavours, and the cancellation of old ones, Johnson had consistently demonstrated his ability to adapt to the shifting demands of the marketplace.¹¹³² Within *Ebony*, the introduction of writers such as Peter Bailey, David Llorens and John Woodford during the 1960s reflected an effort to recruit 'young writers with militant sensibilities' into the JPC fold, and helped to shift the

¹¹²⁹ Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness*, 226-228.

¹¹³⁰ Bennett, "Chronicles of Black Courage Part III," *Ebony*, February 1983, 31; Bennett, "Listen to the Blood," 33.

¹¹³¹ Bennett, "Frederick Douglass," 50; Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," August 1969, 29.

¹¹³² Dingle, *Black Enterprise Titans of the B. E. 100s*, 21.

magazine's content to the left. From a different perspective, female journalists such as Era Bell Thompson and Phyl Garland came to occupy key positions within the magazine's hierarchy. However, despite the influence of these figures, the magazine's senior editorial team remained largely static for much of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This trend was so noticeable that Greyhound addressed it through an advert in *Ebony's* fortieth anniversary special. The company paid tribute to the longevity of publisher Johnson, senior editor Bennett, executive editor Herbert Nipson, and managing editors Hans J. Massaquoi and Charles Sanders, who had presided over *Ebony* for a combined total of nearly 160 years.¹¹³³

Ebony, Advertisers, and the Making of and Selling of Modern Black History

As with all significant milestones, *Ebony's* occasional anniversary issues became a moment for the magazine to look back on its own history, and to reflect on its role within the development of post-World War black history. For its tenth anniversary, the magazine celebrated 'the story of *Ebony*', and the magazine's role in drawing advertising attention to the 'negro market.'¹¹³⁴ In a commissioned piece for its twentieth anniversary, Langston Hughes declared that the magazine's first two decades 'could well serve as an overall history of the American negro.'¹¹³⁵ Ten years later, Johnson reminded his readers of *Ebony's* role in documenting the 'great and pulsing nation within a nation that we call the black community.'¹¹³⁶ This pattern was continued in 1985, where the

¹¹³³ "Greyhound," *Ebony*, November 1985, 87.

¹¹³⁴ "The Story of *Ebony*," *Ebony*, November 1955, 122-128.

¹¹³⁵ Hughes, "*Ebony's* Nativity," 41.

¹¹³⁶ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, November 1975, 30.

publisher positioned his magazine as a symbol of the post-World War struggle for racial equality, and as a testament to 'four decades of black progress.'¹¹³⁷

However, there was one aspect of the magazine's historical coverage which changed dramatically over the course of these anniversary issues. In early commemorative issues there was little attempt by advertisers to appeal either directly to the magazine's own history, or more broadly to the significance of black history. By contrast, the magazine's 1985 anniversary issue was awash with advertisers falling over one another to express their appreciation of the magazine's endurance and significance, and by extension confirm their deference to the black consumer. Coca Cola produced an advert with the number '40' comprised of previous *Ebony* covers and previous Coca Cola adverts in the magazine stretching back to the 1940s.¹¹³⁸ Posner described the magazine as a 'superstar for 40 years.'¹¹³⁹ Columbia Records commended the magazine on 40 years of covering the most significant achievements in black music, a tradition Columbia claimed it was 'proud to share.'¹¹⁴⁰ Not to be outdone, Soft Sheen Products declared that *Ebony* was 'indelibly etched into the hearts and minds of Black America', Johnson Wax insisted that 'for forty years, black families have relied on *Ebony* magazine for uplifting news about their communities', and the First National Bank of Chicago even contributed a mock birthday card.¹¹⁴¹

¹¹³⁷ Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," *Ebony*, November 1985, 37.

¹¹³⁸ "Coca Cola," *Ebony*, November 1985, 9.

¹¹³⁹ "Posner," *Ebony*, November 1985, 135.

¹¹⁴⁰ "Columbia," *Ebony*, November 1985, 95.

¹¹⁴¹ "First Chicago," *Ebony*, November 1985, 345; "Johnson Wax," *Ebony*, November 1985, 20; "Soft Sheen," *Ebony*, November 1985, 291.

Perhaps the most striking contribution came through a multipage feature from AT&T.¹¹⁴² The advert noted that throughout history, black newspapers and magazines had delivered news to the community, and provided an important 'black perspective on world affairs.' AT&T argued that its own communications network had 'enabled black reporters and editors to quickly and efficiently gather and report the news.' Furthermore, it situated this usage as a political act, contending that 'AT&T lines have carried the words of leaders such as Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Dr. King. We've transmitted the stories of historical events like the sit-ins, the first black Supreme Court Justice and the desegregation of the schools.' Under the heading of 'BLOODLINES', the advertiser applauded both its own and *Ebony's* role promoting the black consumer, and helping to bring black America close together.¹¹⁴³

Through such declarations, it would appear that Bennett's call for readers to 'listen to the blood' had also been heard by the magazine's advertisers. Similarly, companies such as Coors channelled Bennett's depiction of a 'living history' to applaud those who 'keep black history alive by passing on stories of the past to younger generations.'¹¹⁴⁴ The integration of corporate advertisers directly into the living black history imagined by Bennett was merely a continuation of earlier efforts to participate in his recovery of the black past, in both consolidating and competing ways. An important continuity came through a reinforcement of the 'patrilineal black history' produced through *Ebony's* editorial content, and Bennett's understanding of the relationship between black masculinity and black liberation.

¹¹⁴² "AT&T," *Ebony*, November 1985, 2-4.

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁴⁴ "Coors," *Ebony*, February 1986, 12.

From the mid-1960s onwards *Ebony's* advertisers looked to celebrate the black male pioneers who had 'helped change the world!', and suggested that by buying their products, readers could help the black man know 'that he is somebody.'¹¹⁴⁵ During the 1970s, these initial efforts were developed into ambitious projects such as Anheuser Busch's 'Great Kings of Africa' series.¹¹⁴⁶ Created with the assistance of John Henrik Clarke, this series would develop into a touring exhibit that lasted for twenty-five years, and arguably helped to 'fill a void in understanding the ancestral history of African-Americans.'¹¹⁴⁷ Yet whilst far more ambitious than earlier advertising campaigns, this series marked a continuation of some of their weaknesses – it would take nearly a decade for Budweiser to feature 'Great African Queens' such as Cleopatra.¹¹⁴⁸

Like *Ebony's* editorial content, the turn towards black history by its advertisers highlighted the trade-off between promoting valuable knowledge about the black past, and helping to reinforce existing hierarchies of race, sex, class and gender. On a broader level, such efforts can be understood as just one small, albeit striking, part of the ways in which radical black literary, political and historical expression became mediated and moderated through corporate capitalism and developing neoliberal projects.¹¹⁴⁹ This dynamic can be traced through the evolution of black media outlets such as *Black Journal* 'away from the idealism of late 1960s visions of Black Power' and towards a more

¹¹⁴⁵ "Negro Heritage Library," *Ebony*, November 1966, 155; "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, August 1967, 38; "Old Taylor," *Ebony*, March 1970, 48.

¹¹⁴⁶ "Anheuser-Busch," *Ebony*, May 1976, 78-79; "Anheuser-Busch," *Ebony*, July 1977, 74.

¹¹⁴⁷ Ezra Aharone, *Sovereign Evolution: Manifest Destiny from 'Civil Rights' to 'Sovereign Rights'* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2008), 4; "Legends of the Crown," *Anheuser Busch*, <http://anheuser-busch.com/index.php/our-responsibility/community-our-neighborhoods/education/legends-of-the-crown>.

¹¹⁴⁸ "Budweiser," *Ebony*, February 1984, 67.

¹¹⁴⁹ Hill and Rabig, "Toward a History of the Business of Black Power," 31-33.

conservative political and economic perspective.¹¹⁵⁰ It can be seen through the embrace of black corporate executives by American businesses to 'address government hiring policies while minimizing black power', or through the transformation of Kwanzaa from a 'black nationalist observation to a corporate celebration of American multicultural marketing.'¹¹⁵¹

From a different perspective, the apparent embrace of black history by corporate providers by the magazine's 40th anniversary contrasted with the declining frequency and originality of *Ebony's* black history content. During the 1960s, and for much of the 1970s, the magazine's historical content had been driven forward by Bennett's black history series and other editorial contributions. These efforts were supplemented by more sporadic advertising attempts to engage with black history. However, during the late 1970s and into the 1980s, this editorial-advertising dynamic can be seen to have shifted. The five part series 'Chronicles of Black Courage' between 1982 and 1983 marked Bennett's last original black history series, while the publication of *Wade in the Water* in 1979 would be his last book for over twenty years.¹¹⁵² Furthermore, Bennett's appointment as the *Ebony's* executive editor in 1987 had major ramifications for the magazine's historical coverage.¹¹⁵³ After he had assumed this role, Bennett's contribution of original historical content almost completely ended.

¹¹⁵⁰ Heitner, *Black Power TV*, 117-121; James P. Murray, "A Pallid Spring Schedule Hits With Black Journal a Whole New Thing," *New York Amsterdam News*, 1 February 1975, D10.

¹¹⁵¹ Sharon M. Collins, *Black Corporate Executives: the Making and Breaking of the Black Middle Class* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 42; Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 331.

¹¹⁵² Bennett would publish his long awaited treatise on Lincoln in 2000. Bennett, "Chronicles of Black Courage Part I," *Ebony*, November 1982, 44; Bennett, *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000); *Wade in the Water: Great Moments in Black History* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1979).

¹¹⁵³ "Backstage," *Ebony*, October 1987, 29.

When faced with this apparent transition, one could argue that *Ebony's* engagement with black history between the late 1950s and late 1980s offers a simple rise and fall narrative. The decision to use Bennett's own role within *Ebony* as a foil for my broader analysis of its historical content certainly helps to reinforce this position. Yet such a reading would only be partially true. As this study has shown, *Ebony's* construction of black history was both highly politicised and highly marketable; both complex and deeply contested. Similarly, just as *Ebony's* historical coverage did not start with Bennett's appointment as senior editor, it did not end with his promotion to executive editor. As Kitch has acknowledged, the magazine has continued to publish a 'significant amount of historical material' over the past twenty-five years, and has maintained, and in some ways expanded its commitment to 'telling the story of Black America.'¹¹⁵⁴

However, what Kitch fails to recognise is that many of the black history features published in *Ebony* following Bennett's promotion to executive editor were reprints of his earlier work. From the mid-1980s onward, much of the fresh impetus for *Ebony's* historical coverage came not from its editorial features, but from the contributions of its advertisers. More significantly, whereas Bennett's earlier black history series had been spread throughout the year, during the 1980s his contributions became more heavily focused on 'signature' pieces to coincide with *Ebony's* commemoration of the King Holiday in January, and the celebration of Black History Month in February. Alongside the reprinting of content such as King's 'Advice for Living' column, and new features such as 'Memorable Photos from the *Ebony* Files', these changes shifted the

¹¹⁵⁴ "Black America," *Ebony*, December 1973, 125; Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 91-92.

magazine's content towards a more self-reverential and depoliticised representation of black history.¹¹⁵⁵

From this perspective, the black revolution appeared to leave its most lasting impact not in the political or cultural sphere, but in the American marketplace. Both Bennett and *Ebony* played a key role in this process. As *The Crisis* noted in December 1965, *Ebony's* increasing engagement with the civil rights struggle was not only a 'sound editorial policy, but also good business.'¹¹⁵⁶ Similarly, whilst Bennett's frustrations at the co-optation of 'black heritage' by commercial and political interests had become acute by the 1980s, they highlighted the impact of his own writing. Through emphasising the enduring power of black history, Bennett had raised the awareness of his readers. More significantly, he had gained the attention of corporate advertisers. When viewed as a whole, *Ebony's* black history content during this period provides a telling insight into not only black history's transition from the margins to the centre of American culture, but its ambiguous and increasingly important role within new corporate and political projects.¹¹⁵⁷

¹¹⁵⁵ King, "Advice for Living," *Ebony*, November 1990, 136; "Memorable Photos from the *Ebony* Files," *Ebony*, December 1984, 122.

¹¹⁵⁶ "Felicitations to '*Ebony*,'" *The Crisis*, December 1965, 622.

¹¹⁵⁷ Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History*, xi.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archives, Manuscript and Microfilm Collections:

Allan Malcolm Morrison Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York, NY.

Ben Burns Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL.

Doris E. Saunders Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL.

Era Bell Thompson Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL.

Hoyt Fuller Papers, Clark Atlanta University, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Special Collections, Atlanta, GA.

Johnson Publishing Company Archive, Microform Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Johnson Publishing Company Clippings Collection, Clark Atlanta University, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Special Collections, Atlanta, GA.

Lerone Bennett Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

Lerone Bennett, Jr. Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Chicago State University, Chicago, IL.

Vincent Harding Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

Newspapers and Periodicals:

Advertising Age

Afro-American

Atlanta Daily World

Black Books Bulletin

Black Enterprise

Black Stars

Black Times

Black World

Boston Globe

Chicago Defender

Chicago Daily Defender

Chicago Daily News

Chicago Guide
Chicago Sun-Times
Chicago Tribune
The Crisis
Dissent
Ebony
Ebony, Jr!
Ebony Man: EM
Essence
Freedom's Journal
Freedomways
Fortune
Jet
Liberator
Life
Los Angeles Sentinel
Los Angeles Times
Look
Miami Herald
Mother Jones
Negro Digest
Negro History Bulletin
New York Amsterdam News
New York Times
Washington Post
Washington Times

Secondary Sources:

Aharone, Ezra. *Sovereign Evolution: Manifest Destiny from 'Civil Rights' to 'Sovereign Rights'*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2008.

Alderman, Derek H. "Street Names and the Scaling of Memory: the Politics of Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. Within the African American Community." In *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement: Controversies and Debates*. Edited by John A. Kirk, 232-244. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Anderson, Alan B., and George W. Pickering. *Confronting the Color Line: the Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.

Anheuser Busch. "Legends of the Crown." Accessed 19 June 2015.
<http://anheuser-busch.com/index.php/our-responsibility/community-our-neighborhoods/education/legends-of-the-crown>.

Aptheker, Herbert. *Documentary History of the Negro People*. New York: Citadel Press, 1951.

Arsenault, Raymond. *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Asante, Molefi Kete. *The African American People: A Global History*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

- *Afrocentricity: the Theory of Social Change*. Chicago: African American Images, 2003.

Atwater, Tony. "Editorial Policy of *Ebony* Before and After the Civil Rights Act of 1964." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 59 (1982): 87-90.

Bacon, Jacqueline. *Freedom's Journal: the First African-American Newspaper*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007.

Baker, Bruce E. *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007.

Baker, Houston A. *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

- "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere." *Public Culture* 7 (1994): 3-33.

Baldwin, Davarian L. *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Baldwin, Lewis V. *The Voice of Conscience: the Church in the Mind of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Baldwin, Lewis V., and Rufus Burrow, Jr. "General Introduction." In *The Domestication of Martin Luther King Jr.: Clarence B. Jones, Right-Wing Conservatism, and the Manipulation of the King Legacy*. Edited by Lewis V. Baldwin and Rufus Burrow, Jr., xix-xxxii. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013.

Baraka, Amiri. *Home: Social Essays*. New York: William Morrow, 1966.

Barr, John M. "Holding Up a Flawed Mirror to the American Soul: Abraham Lincoln in the Writing of Lerone Bennett, Jr." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 35 (2014): 43-65.

Bass, S. Jonathan. *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the 'Letter From Birmingham Jail'*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001.

Bean, Kellie. *Post-Backlash Feminism: Women and the Media since Reagan-Bush*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2007.

Bennett, Jr., Lerone. *Before the Mayflower: a History of Black America*. Seventh Edition. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2007.

- *Black Power, U.S.A.: the Human Side of Reconstruction, 1867-1877*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1967.

- *The Challenge of Blackness*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1972.

- *Confrontation: Black and White*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1965.

- *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000.

- "Have We Overcome?" In *Have We Overcome? Race Relations since Brown, 1954-1979*. Edited by Michael V. Namorato, 189-200. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979.

- *The Making of Black America*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1975.

- *The Negro Mood and Other Essays*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1964.

- *Pioneers in Protest*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1968

- *Wade in the Water: Great Moments in Black History*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1979.

- *What Manner of Man: a Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1964.

- "Nat's Last White Man." In *The Second Crucifixion of Nat Turner*. Edited by John Henrik Clarke, 3-16. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1997.

Berger, Dan. *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Berlin, Ira. *The Making of African America: the Four Great Migrations*. New York: Penguin Books 2011.

Billings, Brett Powers. "No Man's Land: the Construction of Middle-Class Masculinity in *Ebony* and *Esquire* 1948-1953." MA diss., Oklahoma State University, 2008.

Billingsley, Andrew, and Amy Tate Billingsley. *Black Families in White America*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Biondi, Martha. *The Black Revolution on Campus*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

- *To Stand and Fight: the Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Biskind, Peter. *Easy Riders Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock-'n'-Roll Generation Saved Hollywood*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

Bivins, Joy, and Rosemary K. Adams. *Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of the Ebony Fashion Fair*. Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 2013.

Black Public Sphere Collective, *The Black Public Sphere: a Public Culture Book*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Blassingame, John. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Blauner, Bob. *Still the Big News: Racial Oppression in America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

Blight, David W. "The Burden of African-American History: Memory, Justice, and a Usable Past." In *Major Problems in African-American History: Volume II, From Freedom to 'Freedom Now,' 1865-1990s*, 15-23. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

- *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

Bodnar, John E. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Booker, Simeon, with Carole McCabe Booker, *Shocking the Conscience: a Reporter's Account of the Civil Rights Movement*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013.

Bostdorff, Denise M., and Steven R. Goldzwig. "History, Collective Memory, and the Appropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Reagan's Rhetorical Legacy." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35 (2005): 661-690.

von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: the Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010.

Boyd, Melba J. *Wrestling With the Muse: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Boyd, Michelle R., *Jim Crow Nostalgia: Reconstructing Race in Bronzeville*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Branch, Taylor. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007.

Broussard, James H. *Ronald Reagan: Champion of Conservative America*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Broussard, Jinx Coleman. *African American Foreign Correspondents*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013.

- Broussard, Jinx Coleman, and Sky Chance Cooley. "Ebony's Era Bell Thompson Travels the World to Tell the Story." *American Journalism* 26 (2009): 7-30.
- Brown, Elsa Barkley. "Imagining Lynching: African American Women, Communities of Struggle, and Collective Memory." In *African American Women Speak Out on Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas*. Edited by Geneva Smitherman, 100-124. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995.
- Brown, Korey Bowers. "SOULED OUT: *Ebony* Magazine in an Age of Black Power, 1965-1975." PhD diss., Howard University, 2010.
- Bruchey, Stuart. "A Brief Overview of Post-World War II Expansions." In *History of the U.S. Economy since World War II*. Edited by Harold G. Vatter and John F. Walker, 48-51. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996.
- Buckmaster, Henrietta. *Let My People Go: the Story of the Underground Railroad and the Growth of the Abolition Movement*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959.
- Burns, Andrea. *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.
- Burns, Ben. *Nitty Gritty: a White Editor in Black Journalism*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996.
- Burns, Rebecca. *Burial for a King: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Funeral and the Week that Transformed Atlanta and Rocked the Nation*. London: Scribner, 2011.
- Capparell, Stephanie. *The Real Pepsi Challenge: the Inspirational Story of Breaking the Color Barrier in American Business*. New York: Free Press, 2007.
- Carby, Hazel. *Race Men*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Carmichael, Stokely, and Charles V. Hamilton. *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- Carmichael, Stokely, with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell. *Ready For Revolution: the Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael*. New York: Scribner, 2003.
- Carson, Clayborne. *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Carson, Clayborne, Susan Carson, Susan Englander, Troy Jackson, Gerald L. Smith. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Volume IV: Symbol of the Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Carson, Clayborne, Tenisha Armstrong, Susan Carson, Adrienne Clay, Kieran Taylor. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Volume V: Threshold of a New Decade*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Catsam, Derek. *Freedom's Main Line: the Journey of Reconciliation and the Freedom Rides*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009.
- Chambers, Jason. *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

- Chapko, Michael K. "Black Ads Are Getting Blacker." *Journal of Communications* 26 (1976): 175-178.
- Chapman, Mark L. *Christianity on Trial: African American Religious Thought Before and After Black Power*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Chappell, David L. *Waking From the Dream: the Struggle for Civil Rights in the Shadow of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Random House, 2014.
- Chiasson, Lloyd. *The Press in Times of Crisis*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995.
- Clayton, Ed. *The Negro Politician: his Successes and Failures*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1964.
- Cleaver, Eldridge. *Soul on Ice*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.
- Click, J. W. "Comparison of Editorial Content of *Ebony* Magazine, 1967 and 1974." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 52 (1975): 716-720.
- Cohen, Cathy J. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumers' Republic: the Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Random House, 2003.
- Collins, Sharon M. *Black Corporate Executives: the Making and Breaking of the Black Middle Class*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.
- Connor, Michael E., and Joseph L. White. "Fatherhood in Contemporary Black America: Invisible but Present." In *Black Fathers: An Invisible Presence in America*. Edited by Michael E. Connor and Joseph L. White, 3-16. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.
- Corbould, Clare. *Becoming African Americans: Black Public Life in Harlem, 1919-1939*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Courtwright, David T. *No Right Turn: Conservative Politics in Liberal America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Craig, Maxine Leeds. *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?: Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Crawford, Margo. "Must Revolution Be A Family Affair? Revisiting *The Black Woman*." In *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*. Edited by Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, 185-204. New York: New York University Press, 2009.
- Crump, Paul. *Burn, Killer, Burn!* Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1962.
- Cuordileone, K. A. *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Dagbovie, Pero Gaglo. *African American History Reconsidered*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
 - *What is African American History?* Malden: Polity Press, 2015.

- Davidson, Basil. *The Lost Cities of Africa*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959.
- Dawson, Michael C. *Black Visions: the Roots of Contemporary African American Political Ideologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Denning, Michael. "The Age of the CIO." In *American Studies: an Anthology*. Edited by Janice A. Radway, Kevin K. Gaines, Barry Shank and Penny Von Eschen, 166-176. Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2009.
- Dingle, Derek T. *Black Enterprise Titans of the B. E. 100s: Black CEOs who Redefined and Conquered American Business*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999.
- Doreski, C. K. *Writing America Black: Race Rhetoric and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998.
- Drexel, Allen. "Before Paris Burned: Race, Class and Male Homosexuality on the Chicago South Side, 1935-1960." In *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community Histories*. Edited by Brett Beemyn, 119-144. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *Black Folk Then and Now*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1939.
- *Black Reconstruction in America*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935.
 - "Non-Public Library." In *The World of W. E. B. Du Bois: a Quotation Sourcebook*. Edited by Meyer Weinberg, 140. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992.
 - *The Souls of Black Folk*, reprint. Rockville: Arc Manor, 2008.
- Duberman, Martin B. *Howard Zinn: a Life on the Left*. New York: The New Press, 2012.
- Dubey, Madhu. *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Dwyer, Owen J., and Derek H. Alderman. *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory*. Chicago: the Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2008.
- Dyson, Michael Eric. *Debating Race with Michael Eric Dyson*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007.
- *I May Not Get There With You: the True Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: The Free Press, 2000.
- Ebony presents the John H. Johnson Interview*. Directed by Lerone Bennett, Jr. Chicago, Johnson Publishing Company, 2007. DVD.
- Elkins, Stanley. *Slavery: a Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Ernest, John. *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

- *A Nation within a Nation: Organizing African American Communities before the Civil War*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 2011.

Eskew, Glenn T. *But For Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Eyerman, Ron. *The Cultural Sociology of Political Assassination: From MLK and RFK to Fortuyn and Van Gogh*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

- *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2001.

Fairclough, Adam. "Was Martin Luther King a Marxist?" *History Workshop* 15 (1983): 117-125.

Farrar, Hayward. *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998.

Fehrenbacher, Don E. *Lincoln in Text and Context: Collected Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.

Feinberg, Joel. *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law: Volume 3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Fenderson, Jonathan B. "Journey Toward a Black Aesthetic: Hoyt Fuller, the Black Arts Movement and the Black Intellectual Community." PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, 2011.

Ferguson, Karen Jane. *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Ferguson, Roderick A. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Fleming, John E., and Margaret T. Burroughs. "Dr. Margaret T. Burroughs: Artist, Teacher, Administrator, Writer, Political Activist, and Museum Founder." *The Public Historian* 21 (1999): 31-55.

Follett, Richard, Eric Foner and Walter Johnson, *Slavery's Ghost: the Problem of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011.

Ford, Gerald. "Message on the Observance of Black History Month." 10 February 1976. <http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/speeches/760074.htm>.

Foster, Frances Smith. *'Til Death or Distance Do Us Part: Love and Marriage in African America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Foster, Gaines M. *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Fowler, Virginia C. *Nikki Giovanni: a Biography*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.

Franklin, John Hope. *The Emancipation Proclamation*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1963.

- *From Slavery to Freedom: a History of Negro Americans*. New York: Knopf, 1947.

- "On the Evolution of Scholarship in Afro-American History." In *The Harvard Guide to African American History*. Edited by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Leon F. Litwack and Darlene Clarke Hine, xxiii-xxx. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: a Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." In *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*. Edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen, 197-231. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *Black Bourgeoisie*. New York: The Free Press, 1957.
- de Freece-Wilson, Eileen. "Era Bell Thompson: Chicago Renaissance Writer." PhD diss., State University of New Jersey, 2010.
- Gaines, Kevin K. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Gallon, Kim. "Silences Kept: the Absence of Gender and Sexuality in Black Press Historiography." *History Compass* 10 (2012): 207-218.
- Garrow, David J. *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: from 'Solo' to Memphis*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1981.
- Geary, Daniel. *Beyond Civil Rights: the Moynihan Report and its Legacy*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- Gitter, A. George, Stephen M. O'Connell and David Mostofsky. "Trends in Appearance of Models in *Ebony* Ads over 17 Years." *Journalism Quarterly* 49 (1972): 547-550.
- Glickman, Lawrence B. *Buying Power: a History of Consumer Activism in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Goduti, Philip A. *Robert F. Kennedy and the Shaping of Civil Rights, 1960-1964*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2012.
- Golden Legacy Illustrated History Series. "Magazine Titles." Accessed 15 June 2015, <http://golden-legacy.com/about>.
- Gordon, Tammy S. "'Take Amtrak to Black History': Marketing Heritage Tourism to African Americans in the 1970s." *Journal of Tourism History* (2015): 1-21. Accessed 17 August 2015. doi: 10.1080/1755182X.2015.1047804.
- Goudsouzian, Aram. *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.
- Graves, Earl G. *How to Succeed in Business Without Being White: Straight Talk on Making it in America*. New York: HarperBusiness, 1997.
- Gray, Herman. *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Green, Adam. *Selling the Race: Culture, Community and Black Chicago, 1940-1955*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Greene, Lorenzo J., Arvarh E. Strickland. *Selling Black History for Carter G. Woodson: a Diary, 1930-1933*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996.

- Gross, Daniel. *Forbes Greatest Business Stories of All Time*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1996.
- Grossman, James. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Gubert, Betty Kaplan, Miriam Sawyer, and Caroline M. Fannin. *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science*. Westport: Oryx Press, 2002.
- Guelzo, Allen C. *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: the End of Slavery in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- Gutman, Herbert. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.
- Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. "Remembering Our Feminist Forefathers." In *Progressive Black Masculinities*. Edited by Athena D. Mutua, 43-54. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Guzman, Richard. *Black Writing from Chicago: in the world, not of it?* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.
- Haley, Alex. *Roots: the Saga of an American Family*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976.
- Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *Journal of American History* 91 (2005): 1233-1263.
- Hall, Simon. "The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966-1969." *The History* 69 (2007): 49-82.
- *Peace and Freedom: the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements of the 1960s*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.
- Hamm, Theodore. *Rebel and a Cause: Caryl Chessman and the Politics of the Death Penalty in Postwar California, 1948-1974*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Harding, Vincent. "Power From Our People: the Sources of the Modern Revival of Black History." *The Black Scholar* 18 (1987): 40-51.
- Hardison, Ayesha K. *Writing Through Jane Crow: Race and Gender Politics in African American Literature*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014.
- Harlan, Louis R., Raymond Smock, *Booker T. Washington in Perspective: Essays of Louis R. Harlan*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988.
- Harper, Philip Brian. *Are We Not Men?: Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Harris, Robert L. "Coming of Age: the Transformation of Afro-American Historiography." *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1982): 107-121.
- "In Memoriam: Hoyt W. Fuller." *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1982): 80-81.
- Harris-Lacewell, Melissa V. *Barbershops, Bibles and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

- Hartman, Andrew. *A War for the Soul of America: a History of the Culture Wars*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Hartnett, Rodney T., and Carol U. Libby. "Agreement with Views of Martin Luther King, Jr. Before and After His Assassination." *Phylon* 33 (1972): 79-87.
- Hawkins, Odie. *Black Chicago*. Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing, 1992.
- Heitner, Devorah., *Black Power TV*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Helgeson, Jeffrey. *Crucibles of Black Empowerment: Chicago's Neighborhood Politics from the New Deal to Harold Washington*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Heltzel, Peter. *Resurrection City: a Theology of Improvisation*. Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdmans Publishing, 2012.
- Herskovits, Melville J. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.
- Henderson, Laretta. *Ebony Jr!: the Rise, Fall, and Return of a Black Children's Magazine*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: the Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Hildenbrand, Suzanne. *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women in*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing, 1996.
- Hill, Lauren Warren, and Julia Rabig. "Toward a History of the Business of Black Power." In *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America*. Edited by Lauren Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, 15-44. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012.
- Hine, Darlene Clark Hine. *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History*. New York: Carlson Publishing, 1994.
- "John Hope Franklin and Black History in Transition." *Journal of African American History* 94 (2009): 354-361.
- Hirsch, Arnold R. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Hirsch, Paul M. "An Analysis of *Ebony*: the Magazine and its Readers." *Journalism Quarterly* 45 (1968): 261-270.
- Hixson, Walter L. *Historical Memory and Representations of the Vietnam War*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.
- Hogan, Jackie. *Lincoln, Inc.: Selling the Sixteenth President in Contemporary America*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011.
- Hogan, Joseph. *The Reagan Years: the Record in Presidential Leadership*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Hogan, Wesley C. *One Heart, Many Minds: SNCC's Dream for a New America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

- Holloway, Jonathan Scott. *Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory and Identity in Black America since 1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
- Horton, James O. *Landmarks of African American History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Horton, James O., and Lois E. Horton. *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979.
- Hosley, David H., and Gayle K. Yamada. *Hard News: Women in Broadcast Journalism*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987.
- Hulsether, Mark. *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999.
- Ingham, John N., and Lynne B. Feldman. *African American Business Leaders: a Biographical Dictionary*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Jackson, Angela. "Gwendolyn Brooks: In Memoriam." In *On Gwendolyn Brooks: Reliant Contemplation*. Edited by Stephen Caldwell Wright, 277-284. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001.
- Jackson, Carlton. *Hounds of the Road: a History of the Greyhound Bus Company*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press.
- Jackson, Esther Cooper, "Introduction." In *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in their Own Country*. Edited by Esther Cooper Jackson and Constance Pohl, xix-xxx. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.
- Janken, Kenneth Robert. *Rayford W. Logan and the Dilemma of the African American Intellectual*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993.
- Jefferson, Thomas and Edwin M. Betts. *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book: with Commentary and Relevant Extracts From Other Writings*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.
- Jelks, Randal Maurice. *Benjamin Elijah Mays, Schoolmaster of the Movement: a Biography*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Johnson, Abby Arthur and Ronald Maberry Johnson. *Propaganda and Aesthetics: the Literary Politics of African-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991.
- Johnson, Cedric. *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Johnson, John H., with Lerone Bennett, Jr. *Succeeding Against the Odds*. New York: Warner Books, 1989.
- Johnson Publishing Company. *Ebony and American Business: a Thirty-Five Year History, 1945-1980*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1980.
- Joseph, Peniel E. "The Black Power Movement: a State of the Field." *Journal of American History* 96 (2009): 751-776.

- "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement." In *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*. Edited by Peniel E. Joseph, 251-278. New York: Routledge, 2006.

- *Stokely: a Life*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2014.

Joyce, Donald F. *Black Book Publishers in the United States: a Historical Dictionary of the Presses, 1817-1990*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Kaplan, Carla. *Miss Anne in Harlem: the White Women of the Black Renaissance*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013.

Kaplan, Sidney, and Emma Nogrady Kaplan. *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.

Keita, Maghan. *Race and the Writing of History: Riddling the Sphinx*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Keller, Ron. "Abraham Lincoln in African American Memory." In *Encyclopedia of African American History: Volume II*. Edited by Paul Finkelman, 172-173. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class*. New York: Free Press, 1994.

Kendi, Ibram X. *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Kern-Foxworth, Marilyn. *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Killian, Lewis M. *Black and White: Reflections of a Southern White Sociologist*. Oxford: General Hall, 1994.

King, Toni. "Who's That Lady?: *Ebony* Magazine and Black Professional Women." In *Disco Divas: Women, Gender and Popular Culture in the 1970s*. Edited by Sherrie A. Inness, 87-102. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

Kirk, John A. *Martin Luther King, Jr.* London: Routledge, 2014.

Kitch, Carolyn L. *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Kitossa, Tamari. "Criticism, Reconstruction and African-Centred Feminist Historiography." In *Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms*. Edited by Njoki Nathani Wane, Katerina Deliovsky and Erica Lawson, 85-116. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2002.

K'Meyer, Tracey E. *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945-1980*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009.

Kotlowski, Dean J. *Nixon's Civil Rights: Politics, Principle and Policy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Krass, Peter. *Sojourner Truth: Antislavery Activist*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004.

- Kruse, Kevin M. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Kusmer, Kenneth L., and Joe W. Trotter. "Introduction." In *African American Urban History since World War II*. Edited by Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, 1-18. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Laham, Nicolas. *The Reagan Presidency and the Politics of Race: in Pursuit of Colorblind Justice and Limited Government*. Westport: Praeger, 1998.
- Lassiter, Matthew D. *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Lawson, Steven F. "Long Origins of the Short Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968." In *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*. Edited by Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer, 9-38. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011.
- Lemons, Gary L. *Womanist Forefathers: Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Lentz, Richard. *Symbols, the News Media, and Martin Luther King*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.
- Leonard, David J. *Screens Fade to Black: Contemporary African American Cinema*. Westport: Praeger, 2006.
- Leslie, Michael. "Slow Fade To?: Advertising in *Ebony* Magazine, 1957-1989." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (1995): 426-435.
- Lester, Julius. *Look Out Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama*. London: Allison & Busby, 1970.
- Levine, Robert S. *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth Century American Literary Nationalism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Lewis, Edward, with Audrey Edwards. *The Man From Essence: Creating a Magazine for Black Women*. New York: Atria Book, 2014.
- Ling, Peter J. *Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Ling, Peter J., and Sharon Monteith. "Introduction." In *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement*. Edited by Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, 1-9. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Lipsitz, George. "Blood Lines and Blood Shed: Intersectionality and Differential Consciousness in Ethnic Studies and American Studies." in *A Concise Companion to American Studies*. Edited by John Carlos Rowe, 153-172. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Lloyd, James B. *Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817-1967*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1981.
- Loftin, Craig M. *Masked Voices: Gay Men and Lesbians in Cold War America*. Albany: State University of New York, 2012.

- Long, Mia C. "Seeking a Place in the Sun: *Sepia Magazine's* Endeavor for Quality Journalism and Place in the Negro Market, 1951-1982." PhD diss., University of Alabama, 2011.
- Long, Michael G. *Martin Luther King, Jr., Homosexuality and the Early Gay Rights Movement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Longo, Julie. "Remembering the Renaissance City: Detroit's Bicentennial Homecoming Festival and Urban Redevelopment." *Michigan Historical Review* 32 (2006): 89-118.
- Lowney, John. *History, Memory and the Literary Left: Modern American Poetry, 1935-1968*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006.
- Lubin, Alex. *Romance and Rights: the Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945-1954*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005.
- Luckett, Jr., Robert E. "Charles Sherrod and Martin Luther King, Jr.: Mass Action and Nonviolence in Albany." In *The Human Tradition in the Civil Rights Movement*. Edited by Susan M. Glisson, 181-198. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006.
- Lusane, Clarence. *African Americans at the Crossroads: the Restructuring of Black Leadership and the 1992 Elections*. Boston: South End Press, 1994.
- Lytle, Mark Hamilton. *America's Uncivil Wars: the Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Mabee, Carleton, with Susan Mabee Newhouse. *Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.
- Mants, Joann Christian. "We Turned This Upside-Down Country Right Side Up." In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*. Edited by Faith S. Holsaert, 128-139. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- Marable, Manning. "Black Studies and the Racial Mountain." In *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*. Edited by Manning Marable, 1-30. Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2000.
- *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society*. Boston: South End Press, 1983.
- *Living Black History. How Reimagining the African American Past Can Remake America's Racial Future*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2005.
- *Race, Reform and Rebellion: the Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007.
- Marcus, Daniel. *Happy Days and Wonder Years: the Fifties and Sixties in Contemporary Cultural Politics*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- Martin, Elmer P., and Joanne M. Martin. *The Black Extended Family*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Matusow, Allen J. *The Unravelling of America: a History of Liberalism in the 1960s*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009.

- Mayer, Jeremy D. "Reagan and Race: Prophet of Color Blindness, Baiter of the Backlash." In *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America's Fortieth President*. Kyle Longley, Jeremy Mayer, Michael Schaller, John W. Sloan, 70-89. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2007.
- Mayes, Keith A. *Kwanzaa: Black Power and the Making of the African American Black Holiday*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Mays, Benjamin. "In the Days of My Youth." In *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality*. Edited by Rudolph P. Byrd and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, 93-111. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- *The Negro's God, as Reflected in His Literature*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1938.
- McLaren, Peter. "Unthinking Whiteness: Rearticulating Diasporic Practise." In *Revolutionary Pedagogies: Cultural Politics, Instituting Education, and the Discourse of Theory*. Edited by Peter Trifonas, 140-173. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- McClendon, John H. "Act Your Age and Not Your Color: Blackness as Material Conditions, Presumptive Context, and Social Category." In *White on White/Black on Black*. Edited by George Yancy, 275-296. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- Meier, August, and Elliott M. Rudwick. *Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915-1980*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Merelman, Richard M. *Representing Black Culture: Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Miller, Glenn. *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007.
- Miller, Keith D. *Voice of Deliverance: the Language of Martin Luther King, Jr., and its Sources*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998.
- Minchin, Timothy J., and John A. Salmond. *After the Dream: Black and White Southerners since 1965*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011.
- Morris, Aldon D. *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: The Free Press, 1986.
- Moses, Wilson Jeremiah, *Afrotopia: the Roots of African American Popular History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. "Letter to Harry McPherson, 11 September 1966." In *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: a Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary*. Edited by Steven R. Veisman, 126-130. New York: PublicAffairs, 2010.
- "The Negro Family: a Case for National Action." United States Department of Labor. March 1965. <http://www.blackpast.org/primary/moynihan-report-1965>.
- Mumford, Kevin J. "Untangling Pathology: the Moynihan Report and Homosexual Damage, 1965-1975." *Journal of Policy History* 24 (2012): 53-73.

Murdock, George P. *Africa: its Peoples and their Culture History*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959.

Murray, Pauli. "The Liberation of Black Women." In *Words of Fire: an Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*. Edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, 186-198. New York: New Press, 1995.

Myers, Gloria and A. V. Margavio. "The Black Bourgeoisie and Reference Group Change: A Content Analysis of *Ebony*." *Qualitative Sociology* 6 (1983): 291-307.

Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma: the Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York: Harper, 1944.

Nakamaya, Thomas K., and Judith N. Martin. "The 'White Problem' in Intercultural Communication Research and Pedagogy." In *Whiteness, Pedagogy, Performance: Dis/placing Race*. Edited by Leda M. Cooks and Jennifer S. Simpson, 111-140. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007.

Nelson, Stephen. *Leaders in the Labyrinth: College Presidents and the Battleground of Creeds and Convictions*. Westport: Praeger Publishing, 2007.

Newborg, Gerald G. "Era Bell Thompson." In *African American Lives*. Edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, 810-811. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Nilsen, Sarah. "Some People Just Hide in Plain Sight: Historicizing Racism in Mad Men." In *The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America*. Edited by Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner, 191-218. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Noble, Phil. *Beyond the Burning Bus: the Civil Rights Revolution in a Southern Town*. Montgomery: NewSouth Books, 2003.

Norrell, Robert Jefferson. *Up From History: the Life of Booker T. Washington*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009.

Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G. *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Olson, Joel. *The Abolition of White Democracy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Omutu, Ocong Osuwo. "In the Belly of the Beast." In *Welcome to Hell: Letters & Writings from Death Row*. Edited by Jan Arriens, 66-85. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005.

Ondaatje, Michael. *Black Conservative Intellectuals in Modern America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

"Open Mind Round Table with Malcolm X, James Farmer, Wyatt T. Walker and Allan Morrison." YouTube Video. 1: 58:49. Posted by "Donnie Mossberg," 4 December 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9clPdt9y2w>.

Painter, Nell Irvin. *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Parsons, Sara Mitchell. *From Southern Wrongs to Civil Rights: the Memoir of a White Civil Rights Activist*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000.

- Paton, Diana. "Family." In *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*. Edited by Junius P. Rodriguez, 263-266. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997.
- Patterson, James T. *Freedom Is Not Enough: the Moynihan Report and America's Struggle over Black Family Life from LBJ to Obama*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- The People versus Paul Crump*. Directed by William Friedkin. Chicago: Facets Video, 2014. DVD.
- Perlstein, Rick. *The Invisible Bridge: the Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- Phillips, Ulrich B. *American Negro Slavery: a Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1918.
- Pochmara, Anna. *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011.
- Povich, Lynn. *The Good Girls Revolt: How the Women of Newsweek Sued Their Bosses and Changed the Workplace*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2012.
- Pride, Armistead Scott, and Clint C. Wilson. *A History of the Black Press*. Washington: Howard University Press, 1997.
- Pritchett, Wendell E. "Which Urban Crisis? Regionalism, Race, and Urban Policy, 1960-1974." *Journal of Urban History* 34 (2008): 266-286.
- Putnam, Carleton. *Race and Reason: a Yankee View*. Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961.
- Quarles, Benjamin. *Black Mosaic: Essays in Afro-American History and Historiography*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- *Lincoln and the Negro*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.
 - *The Negro in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1961.
 - *The Negro in the Civil War*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953.
- Radano, Ronald M. *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Radin, Paul. *African Folktales and Sculptures*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.
- Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Struggle: a Radical Democratic Vision*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Reagan, Ronald. "Radio Address to the Nation on Civil Rights." 15 June 1985. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38782>.

- "Remarks on Signing the Bill Making the Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., a National Holiday." 2 November 1983.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40708>.
- "Reexamining the Racial Record of Abraham Lincoln." *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 29 (2000): 126-131.
- "Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders." New York: Bantam Books, 1968.
- Rhea, Joseph Tilden. *Race Pride and American Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs* 5 (1980): 631-660.
- Richardson, Mattie Udora. "No More Secrets, No More Lies: African American History and Compulsory Homosexuality." *Journal of Women's History* 15 (2006): 63-76.
- Rieder, Jonathan. *Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter From Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013.
- Robinson, Dean E. *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Robinson, Eugene. *Disintegration: the Splintering of Black America*. New York: Doubleday, 2010.
- Rodgers, Daniel T. *Age of Fracture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Rojas, Fabio. *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Romano, Renee C., and Leigh Raiford. "Introduction." In *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*. Edited by Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, xi-xxiv. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006.
- Rooks, Noliwe M. *Ladies' Pages: African American Women's Magazines and the Culture That Made Them*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- *White Money/Black Power: the Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race and Higher Education*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.
- Rudwick, Elliott M. "Du Bois versus Garvey: Race Propagandists at War." *Journal of Negro Education* 28 (1959): 421-431.
- Ruffins, Fath Davis. "Mythos, Memory, and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820-1990." In *Museums and Communities: the Politics of Public Culture*. Edited by Ivan Karp, Christine M. Kreamer and Steven D. Lavine, 506-611. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.
- Rury, John L. "Race, Space, and the Politics of Chicago's Public Schools: Benjamin Willis and the Tragedy of Urban Education." *History of Education Quarterly* 39 (1999): 117-142.

- Russell, Thaddeus. "The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality." *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 101-128.
- Rust, Daniel L. *Flying Across America: the Airline Passenger Experience*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Ryan, David. "Re-enacting Independence through Nostalgia – the 1976 US Bicentennial after the Vietnam War." *Forum for Inter-American Research* 5 (2012): 26-48.
- Saddler, Valerie. "A Content Analysis of *Ebony's* and *Life's* 1955-1965 Reporting on Black Civil Rights Movement Issues." PhD diss., Ohio University, 1984.
- Salley, Columbus. *The Black 100: a Ranking of the Most Influential African-Americans, Past and Present*. Secaucus: Carol Publishing, 1993.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M. *Robert Kennedy and his Times*. New York: First Mariner Books, 2002.
- Schwartz, Barry. *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth Century America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Scott, Daryl Michael. *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- "Following in the Footsteps of John Hope Franklin." In *Tributes to John Hope Franklin: Scholar, Mentor, Father, Friend*. Edited by Beverly Jarrett, 39- 44. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003.
- Schomburg, Arthur S. "The Negro Digs Up His Past." In *Look For Me All Around You: Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance*. Edited by Louis J. Parascandola, 414-420. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005.
- Seay, George R. "A Prophet with Honor?: the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday and the Making of a National Icon." In *The Domestication of Martin Luther King Jr.: Clarence B. Jones, Right-Wing Conservatism, and the Manipulation of the King Legacy*. Edited by Lewis V. Baldwin and Rufus Burrow, Jr., 236-260. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013.
- Seligman, Amanda I. *Block By Block: Neighborhood and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Sell, Mike. "The Black Arts Movement: Performance, Neo-Orality, and the Deconstruction of the "White Thing." In *African-American Performance and Theater History: a Critical Reader*. Edited by Harry J. Elam, Jr. and David Krasner, 56-70. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Selzer, Steven M. *Meet the Real Joe Black*. Bloomington: iUniverse, 2010.
- Semmes, Clovis E. *Roots of Afrocentric Thoughts: a Reference Guide to Negro Digest/Black World, 1961-1976*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Sewell, George A., and Margaret L. Dwight, *Mississippi Black History Makers*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984.
- Shimkus, John. "Abraham Lincoln Interpretative Center." *Congressional Record* 146:8 (2000): 11264-11265.

- Simanga, Michael. *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People: History and Memory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Simpson, Moira G. *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Singh, Nikhil Pal. "Towards an Effective Antiracism." In *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*. Edited by Manning Marable, 31-51. Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Sinnette, Elinor Des Verney. *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Black Bibliophile and Collector: a Bibliography*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989.
- Smethurst, James. *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- "The Black Arts Movement and Historically Black Colleges and Universities." In *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*. Edited by Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford, 75-91. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006.
- Squires, Caroline R. *African Americans and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.
- "Rethinking the Public Sphere: an Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres." *Communication Theory* 12 (2002): 446-468.
- Stampp, Kenneth. *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*. New York: Knopf, 1956.
- Stange, Maren. "Photographs Taken in Everyday Life: *Ebony's* Photojournalistic Discourse." In *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*. Edited by Todd Vogel, 207-227. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001.
- Stanton, Lucia C. "Those Who Labor For My Happiness: Thomas Jefferson and his Slaves." In *Jeffersonian Legacies*. Edited by Peter S. Onuf, 147-180. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.
- Stewart, Jeffrey C., and Fath Davis Ruffins. "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspectives, 1828-1984." In *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Edited by Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig, 307-338. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
- Stokes, Melvyn. *D. W. Griffith's the Birth of a Nation: a History of 'the Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time'*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Strickland, Arvarh E. *History of the Chicago Urban League*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001.
- Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- "Hilburn, Hattiesburg, and Hitler: Wartime Activists Think Globally and Act Locally." In *Fog of War: the Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement*. Edited by Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, 87-102. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

- Summers, Martin Anthony. *Manliness and its Discontents: the Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity 1900-1930*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004.
- Sumner, David. *The Magazine Century: American Magazines since 1900*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.
- Sundquist, Eric J. "From Antislavery to Civil Rights." In *Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*. Edited by Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter, 416-435. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Swindall, Lindsey R. *Paul Robeson: a Life of Activism and Art*. Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2013.
- Taylor, Clarence. *Black Religious Intellectuals: the Fight for Equality from Jim Crow to the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Theoharis, Jeanne. "Introduction." In *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South: 1940-1980*. Edited by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodward, 1-16. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Thompson, Era Bell. *Africa: Land of My Fathers*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1954.
- *American Daughter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.
- Thompson, Julius E. *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black Arts Movement in Detroit, 1960-1995*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1999.
- Thompson, Shirley E. "The Black Press." In *A Companion to African American History*. Edited by Alton Hornsby, 332-346. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Toliver, Susan Diane. *Black Families in Corporate America*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998.
- Turman, Eboni Marshall. *Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Turner, James E. "Africana Studies and Epistemology: a Discourse in the Sociology of Knowledge." In *Africana Studies: a Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*. Edited by James L. Conyers, 91-107. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1997.
- Van Deburg, William L. *Modern Black Nationalism: from Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- *New Day in Babylon: the Black Power Movement and American culture, 1965-1975*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- *Slavery & Race in American Popular Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
- Van Dyk, Sandra. "What Is Afrocentric? Applying Afrocentric Analysis to a Non-Fiction Text." In *Afrocentricity and the Academy: Essays on Theory and Practise*. Edited by James L. Conyers, 176-186. Jefferson: McFarland, 2003.
- Vantoch, Victoria. *The Jet Set: Airline Stewardesses and the Making of an American Icon*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

- Verney, Kevern. *The Debate on Black Civil Rights in America*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Vogel, Todd. "Introduction." In *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*. Edited by Todd Vogel, 1-14. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001.
- Wald, Gayle. *Crossing the Line: Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- *It's Been Beautiful: Soul! and Black Power Television*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Walker, Clarence Earl. *Deromanticizing Black History: Critical Essays and Reappraisals*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991.
- Walker, Susannah. *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.
- Wallace, Michelle. *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. New York: Verso, 1990.
- Watras, Joseph. *Politics, Race, and Schools: Racial Integration, 1954-1994*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1997.
- Watts, Jerry Gafio. *Amiri Baraka: the Politics and Art of a Black Intellectual*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- Weems, Robert E. *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.
- Weems, Robert E., with Lewis A. Randolph, *Business in Black and White: American Presidents and Black Entrepreneurs in the Twentieth Century*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.
- West, Cornel and Christa Buschendorf. *Black Prophetic Fire*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2014.
- White, Derrick E. *The Challenge of Blackness: the Institute of the Black World and Political Activism in the 1970s*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2011.
- West, E. James. "We Were All Pioneers: a Discussion with Simeon Booker." *Southern Quarterly* 52 (2014): 215-223.
- Whitlock, Flint. "Racial Discrimination Against Pilots: an Historical Perspective." In *Ethical Issues in Aviation*. Edited by Elizabeth A. Hoppe, 137-144. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011.
- Wiegman, Robyn. *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Wiese, Andrew. *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Wiggins, William H. *O Freedom!: Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987.

Wiley, Dennis W. "God." In *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*. Edited by Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio, 75-93. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Random House, 2010.

"William Freidkin introduces The People vs. Paul Crump." YouTube Video. 12:56. Posted by "CPHPIXfestival," 4 April, 2014. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8vLDTP4EbU>.

Williams, George Washington. *History of the Negro Race in America*, reprint. New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968.

Williams, Rhonda Y. *Concrete Demands: the Search for Black Power in the 20th Century*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Wilson, Mabel. *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Wilson, William Julius. *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Wise, Tim. *Colorblind: the Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity*. San Francisco: City Light Books, 2010.

Woldoff, Rachael A. *White Flight/Black Flight: the Dynamics of Racial Change in an American Neighborhood*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Wolseley, Roland E. *The Black Press, U.S.A.* Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990.

Woods, Randall Bennett. *Quest For Identity: America Since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Woodson, Carter G. "Some Things Negroes Need to Do." *Southern Workman* 51 (1922): 33-36.

Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Wright, Gavin. *Sharing the Prize: the Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution in the American South*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013.

Wright, William D. *Black History and Black Identity: a Call for a New Historiography*. Westport: Praeger, 2002.

Wu, Jinping. *Frederick Douglass and the Black Liberation Movement: the North Star of Black Americans*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

X, Malcolm. *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches*. New York: Monthly Review, 1971.

Young, Elizabeth. *Black Frankenstein: the Making of an American Metaphor*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

Zilversmit, Arthur. "Lincoln and the Problem of Race: A Decade of Interpretations." In *For the Vast Future Also: Essays from the Journal of the*

Abraham Lincoln Association. Edited by Thomas F. Schwartz, 3-20. New York: Fordham University Press, 1999.

Zimmerman, Jonathan. *Whose America?: Culture Wars in the Public Schools*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Zinn, Howard. *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2002.

Zaretsky, Natasha. *No Direction Home: the American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.